اِنَّ هٰذَا الْقُرْاٰنَ يَهْدِيْ لِلَّتِيْ هِيَ اَقْوَمُ وَيُبَشِّرُ الْمُؤْمِنِيْنَ الَّذِيْنَ يَعْمَلُوْنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ اَنَّ لَهُمْ اَجْرًا كَبِيْرًا ۙ

Quran English Translation and Tafseer
Sayyid Abul Ala Mawdudi

Surah 20 Ta Ha

سُوْرَةُ طٰهٰ مَكِّيَّةٌ

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ

(In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate)

طٰهٰ ۟ ١

(20-1) Ta' Ha'

مَآ اَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْاٰنَ لِتَشْقٰٓى ۟ ٢

(20-2) We did not reveal the Qur'an to you to cause you distress;

اِلَّا تَذْكِرَةً لِّمَنْ يَّخْشٰى ۟ ٣

(20-3) it is only a reminder for him who fears Allah; (1)

(1) This verse makes plain the meaning of the previous one. The object of the revelation of the Quran is not to make the Prophet (peace be upon him) do something impossible and to put him to unnecessary distress by demanding from him to imbue the hearts of the obdurate people with faith, but to admonish those people who have fear of Allah. Therefore the Prophet (peace be upon him) should not waste his efforts on those people who have no fear of God left in them, and who do not bother at all about what is truth and what is falsehood.

تَنْزِيْلًا مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْاَرْضَ وَالسَّمٰوٰتِ الْعُلٰى ۟ ٤

(20-4) a revelation from Him Who created the earth and the high heavens.

اَلرَّحْمٰنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوٰى ۟ ٥

(2) That is, after creating the universe, He is ruling over it and conducting all the affairs of its management.

لَ ۥ مَا فِى السَّمٰوٰتِ وَ مَا فِى ٱلۡاَرۡضِ وَ مَا بَيۡنَهُمَا وَ مَا تَحۡتَ الثَّرٰى ۶

(20-6) To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth, and all that is in between, and all that is beneath the soil.

وَاِنۡ تَجۡهَرۡ بِالۡقَوۡلِ فَاِنَّهٗ يَعۡلَمُ السِّرَّ وَاَخۡفَى ۷

(20-7) Whether you speak out aloud (or in a low voice), He knows what is said secretly, and even that which is most hidden. (3)

(3) That is, you need not complain to Allah in a loud voice against the persecution from which you and your companions are suffering and the mischievous machinations your enemies are devising to defeat you for Allah is fully aware of all those things, and He hears even the complaints you cherish in your hearts.

اَللّٰهُ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ لَهُ الۡاَسۡمَآءُ الۡحُسۡنٰى ۸

(20-8) Allah - there is no god but He. His are the most excellent names. (4)

(4) That is, He possesses all the excellent attributes and characteristics.

وَهَلۡ اَتٰىكَ حَدِيۡثُ مُوۡسٰى ۹

(20-9) Has the story of Moses reached you?

اِذۡ رَاَ نَارًا فَقَالَ لِاَهۡلِهِ امۡكُثُوۡۤا اِنِّىۡۤ اٰنَسۡتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّىۡۤ اٰتِيۡكُمۡ مِّنۡهَا بِقَبَسٍ اَوۡ اَجِدُ عَلَى النَّارِ هُدًى ۱۰

(20-10) When he saw a fire (5) and said to his family: "Hold on! I have just perceived a fire; perhaps I will bring a brand

from it for you, or I will find some guidance at the fire about the way to follow." (6)

(5) This happened when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was returning to Egypt after passing several years in exile in Midian, along with his wife whom he had married there. According to the early part of his history, which has been related in Surah Al-Qasas, an Egyptian had been killed by Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), so he had to leave Egypt in order to escape arrest and had taken refuge in Midian.

(6) It appears that this happened during a night of winter, when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was passing through the southern part of the Sinai Peninsula. When he saw a fire at a distance, he went towards it in the hope that he might get some of it to keep his wife and children warm during the night, or at least get some guidance concerning the direction of his journey. But instead of this it was his good fortune that he found the guidance to the right way.

فَلَمَّآ اَتٰىهَا نُوۡدِىَ يٰمُوۡسٰٓى ۝١١

(20-11) When he came to it, a voice called out: "Moses!

اِنِّىۡۤ اَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاخۡلَعۡ نَعۡلَيۡكَ ۚ اِنَّكَ بِالۡوَادِ الۡمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى ۝١٢

(20-12) Verily I am your Lord! Take off your shoes. (7) You are in the sacred valley, Tuwa! (8)

(7) Probably, it is because of this that the Jews do not say their prayers with their shoes on. The Prophet (peace be upon him), however, removed this misunderstanding, saying: Act in contrast to the practice of the Jews who do not say their prayers with their shoes or leather socks on. (Abu Daud). It does not, however, mean that one must say his prayers with the shoes on, but it is merely to make it lawful to say prayers with shoes on. This is confirmed by another tradition, related by Abu Daud from Amar bin Aas, that he had seen the Prophet (peace be upon him) saying his prayer both with and without the shoes. There are

other traditions also to this effect but it should also be kept in mind that there were no carpets, mats, etc. in the mosques in those days, not even in the Prophet's (peace be upon him) Mosque. Therefore it would be improper to go with shoes on into the mosques of today which have carpets, mats, etc. However, one may say his prayer on grassy plots or open ground with shoes on.

(8) In general, the commentators are of the opinion that Tuwa was the name of the valley, but according to some, it is the valley that had been made sacred for the time being.

وَ اَنَا ا خ۪تَر۟ ثُكَ فَا سۡتَمِ لِمَا يُوۡحٰى ﴿۱۳﴾

(20-13) I Myself have chosen you; therefore, give ear to what is revealed.

اِنَّنِ۪ۤ اَنَا اللّٰهُ لَا ا اِلٰهَ اِلَّا ا اَنَا فَا عۡبُدۡنِ۪ وَ اَقِمِ الصَّلٰوةَ لِذِ كۡرِ۪ۤى ﴿۱۴﴾

(20-14) Verily I am Allah. There is no god beside Me. So serve Me and establish Prayers to remember Me. (9)

(9) This is the real object of Salat. It has been prescribed to remind people that they should not become neglectful of Allah by worldly diversions and that they should remember that man is not an unbridled free being but a servant of Allah. Salat has been prescribed five times a day to remind man of Allah's presence.

Some people are of the opinion that it means:

Establish Salat, so that I may remember you. Incidentally, according to this verse, if one forgets to offer a prayer in time, he should offer it when he recollects it. This is also supported by a tradition related by Anas: If one forgets to offer a certain prayer at the proper time, he should offer it whenever he recollects this, for there is no other expiation for this omission. (Bukhari, Muslim, Ahmed). There is another tradition related by Abu Hurairah to the same effect. It was inquired from the Prophet (peace be upon him): What should we do if we remained asleep

during the time of prayer? The Prophet (peace be upon him) said: There is no sin if one remained asleep. The sin is that one should neglect his prayer intentionally while awake. Therefore if one forgets to offer a prayer or remained asleep, he should offer that prayer on remembering it or on awaking. (Tirmizi, Nasai, Abu Daud).

اِنَّ السَّاعَةَ اٰتِيَةٌ اَكَادُ اُخۡفِيۡهَا لِتُجۡزٰى كُلُّ نَفۡسٍۢ بِمَا تَسۡعٰى ﴿۲۰:۱۵﴾

(20-15) The Hour of Resurrection is coming. I have willed to keep the time of its coming hidden so that everyone may be recompensed in accordance with his effort. (10)

(10) After Tauhid, the second thing that was revealed to all the Prophets was the reality of the Hereafter, and they were appointed to impart its knowledge to their peoples. Here its object has also been stated. The Hour of Resurrection is destined to come so that everyone should get the recompense in the Hereafter of what he did in this world, and that Hour has been kept secret to fulfill the requirement of the trial. For the one who believes in the Hereafter will always be on his guard against any deviation from the right way, and the one who does not believe in the coming of that Hour will remain engaged in other things, for he will think that he did not see any sign of the coming of the Hour.

فَلَا يَصُدَّنَّكَ عَنۡهَا مَنۡ لَّا يُؤۡمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوٰىهُ فَتَرۡدٰى ﴿۲۰:۱۶﴾

(20-16) Let him who does not believe in it and follows his lust not turn your thought away from it, lest you are ruined.

وَمَا تِلۡكَ بِيَمِيۡنِكَ يٰمُوۡسٰى ﴿۲۰:۱۷﴾

(20-17) And what is in your right hand, O Moses?" (11)

(11) This question was not asked for the sake of getting any information, for Allah knew that Moses (peace be upon him) held a staff in his hand. The question was posed with a view to impressing upon him the fact that it was a staff so that he might

be mentally prepared to see the miracle which was going to be performed with it.

قَالَ هِیَ عَصَایَ أَتَوَكَّؤُا عَلَیۡهَا وَ أَهُشُّ بِهَا عَلَىٰ غَنَمِی وَ لِیَ فِیهَا مَـَٔارِبُ أُخۡرَىٰ ١٨

(20-18) Moses answered: "This is my staff. I lean on it (when I walk), and with it I beat down leaves for my flock, and I have many other uses for it." (12)

(12) Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) deliberately prolonged his answer and did not stop at: It is my staff. This was because he naturally wanted to prolong the dialogue to make the privilege meeting last longer.

قَالَ أَلۡقِهَا یَـٰمُوسَىٰ ١٩

(20-19) He said: "Moses, throw it down."

فَأَلۡقَىٰهَا فَإِذَا هِیَ حَیَّةٞ تَسۡعَىٰ ٢٠

(20-20) So he threw it down, and lo! it was a rapidly moving snake.

قَالَ خُذۡهَا وَ لَا تَخَفۡ سَنُعِیدُهَا سِیرَتَهَا ٱلۡأُولَىٰ ٢١

(20-21) Then He said: "Seize it and have no fear. We shall restore it to its former state.

وَ ٱضۡمُمۡ یَدَكَ إِلَىٰ جَنَاحِكَ تَخۡرُجۡ بَیۡضَآءَ مِنۡ غَیۡرِ سُوٓءٍ ءَایَةً أُخۡرَىٰ ٢٢

(20-22) And place your hand in your armpit, it will come forth shining white, without blemish. (13) This is another Sign of Allah,

(13) That is, your hand will shine brightly like the sun, but it will not cause any hurt to you. It is strange that the Bible interprets this miracle, saying that his hand was leprous as snow but it was turned again as his other flesh. The Talmud also interprets the miracle in the same way and adds that this was a

miracle which was meant for Pharaoh who was suffering from leprosy. It is a pity that the same interpretation has been adopted by our own commentators, though the correct interpretation is the one that has been adopted by us, and many former commentators. Obviously, it is bad taste to attribute to a Prophet the repugnant miracle of leprosy and that, too, before a king in his court.

لِنُرِيَكَ مِنۡ اٰيٰتِنَا الۡكُبۡرٰى ۚ ﴿۲۳﴾

(20-23) for We shall show you some of Our greatest Signs.

اِذۡهَبۡ اِلٰى فِرۡعَوۡنَ اِنَّهٗ طَغٰى ۖ ﴿۲۴﴾

(20-24) And go to Pharaoh now for he has transgressed all bounds."

قَالَ رَبِّ اشۡرَحۡ لِىۡ صَدۡرِىۡ ۙ ﴿۲۵﴾

(20-25) Moses said: "Lord! Open my breast for me; (14)

(14) That is, fill my heart with the courage that may enable me to perform the obligations connected with the great mission of a Messenger, and give me the confidence for its fulfillment. Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) prayed for this because he realized the grave responsibilities of the great mission.

وَيَسِّرۡ لِىۡۤ اَمۡرِىۡ ۙ ﴿۲۶﴾

(20-26) and ease my task for me,

وَاحۡلُلۡ عُقۡدَةً مِّنۡ لِّسَانِىۡ ۙ ﴿۲۷﴾

(20-27) and loosen the knot from my tongue

يَفۡقَهُوۡا قَوۡلِىۡ ۙ ﴿۲۸﴾

(20-28) so that they may understand my speech; (15)

(15) Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) prayed to Allah for this because he was conscious that he was not a fluent speaker but was slow of speech. He also knew that as a Messenger he would have to be fluent in order to impress Pharaoh and his courtiers. This is confirmed by the Bible (Exodus 4: 10) but the Talmud gives a strange explanation for this impediment in his speech. According to it, when he was a child he burnt his tongue with a live coal to escape punishment from Pharaoh whose crown he had taken off from his head and put it on his own head. The same story has been adopted by many of our commentators though it is absurd on the face of it. Our interpretation is also confirmed by the Quran. The fact is, that at first he was not a fluent speaker and Pharaoh had also taunted him on this impediment. (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayat 52). Prophet Moses realized the same for he said: My brother Aaron is more fluent than me, so send him with me as a helper, so that he may support me (with his fluent speech). (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 34). Afterwards this impediment in his speech was removed and he was able to deliver very fluent speeches. This may be testified by his speeches which have been cited both in the Bible and in the Quran for they are masterpieces of eloquence and rhetoric.

Above all, it does not stand to reason that Allah should appoint a lisper or a stammerer or a stutterer as His Messenger. That is why the Messengers have always been the best of mankind in regard to their appearance, personality and capabilities for they had to be most impressive both in their appearance and conduct, so that they could not be made the target of ridicule and contempt by the people because of such personal defects as stammering or stuttering.

وَ اجۡعَلۡ لِّیۡ وَزِیۡرًا مِّنۡ اَہۡلِیۡ ﴿۲۹﴾

(20-29) and appoint for me, from my household, someone who will help me bear my burden -

ہٰرُوۡنَ اَخِی ﴿۳۰﴾

(20-30) Aaron, my brother. [16]

(16) Prophet Aaron was three years older than Prophet Moses (peace be upon them). (Exodus7:7).

اشۡدُدۡ بِهٖۤ اَزۡرِىۡ ﴿۳۱﴾

(20-31) Strengthen me through him

وَ اَشۡرِكۡهُ فِىۡۤ اَمۡرِىۡ ﴿۳۲﴾

(20-32) and let him share my task

كَىۡ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيۡرًا ۙ﴿۳۳﴾

(20-33) that we may abundantly extol Your glory;

وَّ نَذۡكُرَكَ كَثِيۡرًا ؕ﴿۳۴﴾

(20-34) and may remember You much.

اِنَّكَ كُنۡتَ بِنَا بَصِيۡرًا ؕ﴿۳۵﴾

(20-35) Verily, You have always watched over us."

قَالَ قَدۡ اُوۡتِيۡتَ سُؤۡلَكَ يٰمُوۡسٰى ﴿۳۶﴾

(20-36) He said: "Moses, your petition is granted.

وَ لَقَدۡ مَنَنَّا عَلَيۡكَ مَرَّةً اُخۡرٰى ۙ﴿۳۷﴾

(20-37) We have again bestowed Our favour upon you. [17]

(17) Allah recounts the favors He had shown to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) since his birth in order to impress upon him the fact that he had been brought up under divine care

right from his birth for the purpose of appointing him as a Messenger. Here mere references have been made but in Surah Al-Qasas details of the favors have been given.

اِذۡ اَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلٰٓى اُمِّكَ مَا يُوۡحٰٓى ۙ﴿۳۸﴾

(20-38) Recall, when We indicated to your mother through inspiration:

اَنِ اقۡذِفِيۡهِ فِى التَّابُوۡتِ فَاقۡذِفِيۡهِ فِى الۡيَمِّ فَلۡيُلۡقِهِ الۡيَمُّ بِالسَّاحِلِ يَاۡخُذۡهُ عَدُوٌّ لِّىۡ وَعَدُوٌّ لَّهٗ ؕ وَاَلۡقَيۡتُ عَلَيۡكَ مَحَبَّةً مِّنِّىۡ ۚ وَلِتُصۡنَعَ عَلٰى عَيۡنِىۡ ﴿۳۹﴾

(20-39) 'Put the baby into a chest and then throw him in the river. The river will throw him up on the shore, and then an enemy of Mine and an enemy of his will take him.' And I spread My love over you in order that you might be reared in My sight.

اِذۡ تَمۡشِىۡۤ اُخۡتُكَ فَتَقُوۡلُ هَلۡ اَدُلُّكُمۡ عَلٰى مَنۡ يَّكۡفُلُهٗ ؕ فَرَجَعۡنٰكَ اِلٰٓى اُمِّكَ كَىۡ تَقَرَّ عَيۡنُهَا وَلَا تَحۡزَنَ ۚ وَقَتَلۡتَ نَفۡسًا فَنَجَّيۡنٰكَ مِنَ الۡغَمِّ وَفَتَنّٰكَ فُتُوۡنًا ۚ فَلَبِثۡتَ سِنِيۡنَ فِىۡۤ اَهۡلِ مَدۡيَنَ ۙ ثُمَّ جِئۡتَ عَلٰى قَدَرٍ يّٰمُوۡسٰى ۙ﴿۴۰﴾

(20-40) Recall, when your sister went along, saying: 'Shall I direct you to one who will take charge of him?' Thus We brought you back to your mother so that her heart might be gladdened and she might not grieve. Moses, recall when you slew a person. We delivered you from distress and made you go through several trials. Then you stayed for several years among the people of Midian, and now you have come at the right moment as ordained.

وَاصۡطَنَعۡتُكَ لِنَفۡسِىۡ ۚ﴿۴۱﴾

(20:41) I have chosen you for My service.

اِذۡهَبۡ اَنۡتَ وَاَخُوۡكَ بِاٰيٰتِىۡ وَلَا تَنِيَا فِىۡ ذِكۡرِىۡ ۚ﴿۴۲﴾

(20-42) So go forth, both you and your brother, with My Signs, and do not slacken in remembering Me.

اِذۡہَبَاۤ اِلٰی فِرۡعَوۡنَ اِنَّہٗ طَغٰی ۚ﴿۴۳﴾

(20-43) Go both of you to Pharaoh, for he has transgressed all bounds,

فَقُوۡلَا لَہٗ قَوۡلًا لَّیِّنًا لَّعَلَّہٗ یَتَذَکَّرُ اَوۡ یَخۡشٰی ﴿۴۴﴾

(20-44) and speak to him gently, perhaps he may take heed or fear (Allah)." (18)

(18) The only two ways of bringing a man to the right way are: (1) To convince him by argument and admonition, or (2) To warn him of the consequences of deviation.

(18a) It appears that they implored Allah thus before going before Pharaoh when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had reached Egypt and Aaron had joined him in the propagation of the mission.

قَالَا رَبَّنَاۤ اِنَّنَا نَخَافُ اَنۡ یَّفۡرُطَ عَلَیۡنَاۤ اَوۡ اَنۡ یَّطۡغٰی ﴿۴۵﴾

(20-45) The two said:" (18) Lord! We fear he may commit excesses against us, or transgress all bounds."

(18) The only two ways of bringing a man to the right way are: (1) To convince him by argument and admonition, or (2) To warn him of the consequences of deviation.

(18a) It appears that they implored Allah thus before going before Pharaoh when Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had reached Egypt and Aaron had joined him in the propagation of the mission.

قَالَ لَا تَخَافَاۤ اِنَّنِیۡ مَعَکُمَاۤ اَسۡمَعُ وَ اَرٰی ﴿۴۶﴾

(20-46) He said: "Have no fear. I am with you, hearing and seeing all.

فَاْتِيٰهُ فَقُوْلَاۤ اِنَّا رَسُوْلَا رَبِّكَ فَاَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِيْۤ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ ۙ وَ لَا تُعَذِّبْهُمْ ؕ قَدْ جِئْنٰكَ بِاٰيَةٍ مِّنْ رَّبِّكَ ؕ وَ السَّلٰمُ عَلٰى مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الْهُدٰى ۝۴۷

(20-47) So, go to him, and say: 'Behold, both of us are the Messengers of your Lord. Let the Children of Israel go with us, and do not chastise them. We have come to you with a sign from your Lord; and peace shall be for him who follows the true guidance.

اِنَّا قَدْ اُوْحِيَ اِلَيْنَاۤ اَنَّ الْعَذَابَ عَلٰى مَنْ كَذَّبَ وَ تَوَلّٰى ۝۴۸

(20-48) It has been revealed to us that chastisement awaits those who called the lie to the truth and turned away from it.' " (19)

(19) A comparative study of this incident as given in the Bible and the Talmud will show that the Quran does not copy the stories from these books, but gives its own version in order to portray the Messengers in their true glory and dignity. According to the Bible, when God said to Moses (peace be upon him) that He would send him to Pharaoh, Moses (peace be upon him) replied: Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? (Exodus 3: 11). God persuaded and encouraged Moses (peace be upon him) by giving him signs but he was still reluctant and said: O my Lord, send, I pray thee, by the hand of him whom thou wilt send. (Exodus 4: 13). And the Talmud goes even further than this and says that there was an argument between God and Moses (peace be upon him) for seven days that he should become a Prophet but Moses (peace be upon him) did not accept the offer. At this God was angry with him and so made his brother Aaron (peace be upon him) a partner in his Prophethood. Moreover, He deprived the descendants of Moses (peace be upon him) of the office of priesthood and bestowed it on the descendants of Aaron (peace be upon him). These two versions depict Allah to be suffering from human weaknesses and Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) from inferiority complex.

قَالَ فَمَنْ رَّبُّكُمَا يٰمُوْسٰى ۝۴۹

(20-49) Pharaoh [20] said:" Moses! [21] Who is the Lord of the two of you?"

(20) Here the details have been omitted. These have been given in (Surah Al-Araf, Ayats: 103-108); (Surah Ash- Shuara, Ayats 10-33); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayats 28-40); (Surah An-Naziat, Ayats 15-25) . As regards to the necessary information about Pharaoh, see (E.N. 85 of Surah Al-Araf).

(21) Pharaoh addressed Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) because he was, in regards to Prophethood, the senior of the two. It is also possible that he deliberately addressed him in order to exploit his impediment in speech, and ignored Prophet Aaron (peace be upon him), who was more fluent.

As regards to the implication of this question of Pharaoh, he meant to say: You say that you have brought a message from my Lord to me. Who is that Lord? You should know that I am the Lord of Egypt and the people of Egypt. In regards to this claim of his, see (Surah An-Naziat, Ayat 24); (Surah Az-Zukhruf, Ayat 51); (Surah Al-Qasas, Ayat 38) and (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 29).

It may also be noted that by this claim Pharaoh did not mean to say that he was the sole deity of his people nor did it mean that none other was worshiped in Egypt. As a matter of fact, he himself based his right of sovereignty on his claim of being the incarnation of the sun god. And we also learn from the history of Egypt that there were many other gods and goddesses. In fact, what he claimed was that he was politically the Lord of not only Egypt but also of the whole of mankind theoretically. Therefore, he would not acknowledge that there was any supreme sovereign over him whose delegate might bring an order to him and demand its obedience from him.

قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِیۡۤ اَعۡطٰی کُلَّ شَیۡءٍ خَلۡقَہٗ ثُمَّ ہَدٰی ﴿۵۰﴾

(20-50) He said: "Our Lord is He [22] Who gave everything its form and then guided it." [23]

(22) That is, we acknowledge Him alone as our Lord in every sense. He is our Sustainer, our Maker, our Master, our Sovereign and is Supreme in everything, and there is no other lord in any sense but Him.

(23) This concise sentence needs serious attention. It means that it is Allah alone Who has created everything and given it its distinctive structure, form, capabilities, characteristics, etc.

(1) For instance, man has been given the hands and feet which are given the most appropriate structure that was needed for their right functioning.

(2) A human being, an animal, a plant, mineral and the like, air, water and light, everything has been given that particular form which was needed for its right functioning in the universe.

(3) Then He has guided everything aright to function properly. It is He Who has taught everything the way to fulfill that object for which it has been created. He has taught the ear to hear and the eye to see, the fish to swim and the bird to fly; the earth to grow vegetation and the tree to blossom and bear fruit. In short, He is not only the Creator of everything but also its Guide and Teacher.

Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) employed this concise and meaningful sentence to convey the message to Pharaoh and his people. He not only gave a suitable reply to Pharaoh as to who his Lord was, but also told him why He was his Lord, and how there was no other lord but God. The argument implied in it was this: As Pharaoh and every one of his subjects was obliged to Allah for his human form and could not live even for a moment without the functioning of the different parts of his body which were performing their functions in accordance with the guidance of Allah, so Pharaoh’s claim that he was the lord of the people was absurd, and its acknowledgment by his people that he was their lord, a folly.

Besides this, Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) also hinted at the need of Prophethood which was denied by Pharaoh.

When Allah guides everything in the universe, He has also to fulfill the need of the guidance of mankind. Whereas the guidance of the animals and birds has been provided by instinct, the guidance of rational human beings has been provided by sending Messengers who appealed to them by rational arguments.

قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ ا لۡقُرُوۡنِ الۡاُوۡلٰى ﴿۵۱﴾

(20-51) Pharaoh asked: "Then, what is the state of the former generations?" (24)

(24) The question posed by Pharaoh was very subtle. He meant to say: If there is no other lord than the One Who has given a distinctive form to everyone, then what will be the position of our forefathers who had been worshiping other deities since centuries? Were all those people in error? Did all of them deserve torment? Did they all lack common sense? Thus Pharaoh perhaps wanted to give vent to his anger against Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) for showing disrespect to his forefathers. At the same time he also wanted to incite his courtiers and the common people of Egypt against the message of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). And this trick has always been used against the people who propagate the truth and has always proved very effective to incite those people who lack common sense. This same trick has been mentioned here for it was being employed at the very time against the Prophet (peace be upon him) by the people of Makkah.

قَالَ عِلۡمُهَا عِنۡدَ رَبِّىۡ فِىۡ كِتٰبٍ ۚ لَا يَضِلُّ رَبِّىۡ وَلَا يَنۡسَى ﴿۵۲﴾

(20-52) Moses said: "Its knowledge is with my Lord, recorded in the Book. My Lord does not err, nor does He forget." (25)

(25) This answer is full of wisdom. If Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had said: Yes, they all lacked common sense and had gone astray and would become the fuel of Hell, this answer, though true, would have served the very purpose Pharaoh had in mind in putting the question. But the answer given by the Prophet was true and it frustrated the trick of Pharaoh as well. His answer

was to this effect: Well, those people have now gone before their Lord, and I have no means of judging their deeds and intentions. However, their whole record is safe and secure with Allah, and nothing can escape Him. Allah alone knows how to deal with them. What concerns you and me is our own position and attitude to life. We should be more concerned about our own end than of those who have already passed away into Allah's presence.

الَّذِیۡ جَعَلَ لَکُمُ الۡاَرۡضَ مَہۡدًا وَّ سَلَکَ لَکُمۡ فِیۡہَا سُبُلًا وَّ اَنۡزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً ؕ فَاَخۡرَجۡنَا بِہٖۤ اَزۡوَاجًا مِّنۡ نَّبَاتٍ شَتّٰی ﴿۵۳﴾

(20-53) He (26) it is Who spread the earth for you; and made in it paths for you, and sent down water from the sky, and then through it We brought forth many species of diverse plants.

(26) It is quite obvious that (Ayats 53-55)are an addition by Allah to the foregoing answer by Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). There are other instances of this in the Quran that Allah added a few sentences to the speech of someone by way of admonition. Moreover, it is connected not only with the preceding verse but also with the whole reply of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). (Ayats 50-52).

کُلُوۡا وَ ارۡعَوۡا اَنۡعَامَکُمۡ ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِکَ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّاُولِی النُّہٰی ؕ﴿۵۴﴾

(20-54) So eat yourself and pasture your cattle. Surely there are many Signs in this for people of understanding. (27)

(27) That is, those who use their common sense in their search for the truth, find a way to the reality by the help of these signs, which clearly show that the universe has One Lord Who alone is sustaining it, and there is no room here for any other lord.

مِنۡہَا خَلَقۡنٰکُمۡ وَ فِیۡہَا نُعِیۡدُکُمۡ وَ مِنۡہَا نُخۡرِجُکُمۡ تَارَۃً اُخۡرٰی ﴿۵۵﴾

(20-55) From this very earth We created you and to the same earth We shall cause you to return, and from it We shall bring you forth to life again. (28)

(28) That is, every man has to pass through three stages: (1) From birth to death. (2) From death to Resurrection, and (3) From the Day of Resurrection to Eternity. According to this verse, all the three stages will take place on this earth.

وَ لَقَدۡ اَرَيۡنٰهُ اٰيٰتِنَا كُلَّهَا فَكَذَّبَ وَ اَبٰى ۝٥٦

(20-56) Indeed We showed Pharaoh Our Signs, (29) all of them, but he declared them to be false and rejected them.

(29) “Signs” comprised those arguments which were based on natural phenomena and human life and those miracles which were given to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). These arguments are contained in the speeches of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) which he delivered before Pharaoh, and the miracles which he showed and are mentioned at several places in the Quran.

قَالَ اَجِئۡتَنَا لِتُخۡرِجَنَا مِنۡ اَرۡضِنَا بِسِحۡرِكَ يٰمُوۡسٰى ۝٥٧

(20-57) He said: "Have you come to us to drive us out of our land by your sorcery? (30)

(30) Here by sorcery are meant the miracles of the staff and the shining hand, which according to the details given in Surahs Al-Araf and Ash-Shuara, were shown to Pharaoh by Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) in his first visit to his court. On seeing these miracles Pharaoh was so upset that he cried out: Have you come to drive us out of our country by the power of your sorcery? Although he knew that it had never happened in history that a magician had conquered a country by the power of sorcery. Moreover, there were hundreds of magicians in his own country, who used to show their feats to earn rewards and prizes. Accordingly, Pharaoh’s statement that “you are a sorcerer” on the one hand, and his apprehension that “you want to snatch my kingdom” on the other, were a clear indication of his perturbed mind. In fact, Pharaoh had come to understand that the well reasoned speech of Moses and his miracles were bound to influence not only his courtiers, but also the common people and

accordingly he tried to play upon their prejudices through falsehood and treachery. He did not admit that it was a miracle, but called it sorcery. He wanted to create an impression that any sorcerer of his empire could turn a staff into a serpent. He also incited the people, saying: Look, he says that your forefathers were on the wrong way and deserved perdition. So beware of him, he is not a Prophet. He simply aspires for power. He wants that the Israelites should again capture power here like the times of Joseph and wrest the reigns of government from the Copts. Pharaoh, in fact, wanted to suppress the invitation to the truth through such devices. (For details please see (E.Ns 87-89 of Surah Al-Aaraf); (E.N. 75 of Surah Younus).

فَلَنَاْتِيَنَّكَ بِسِحْرٍ مِّثْلِهٖ فَاجْعَلْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكَ مَوْعِدًا لَّا نُخْلِفُهٗ نَحْنُ وَلَآ اَنْتَ مَكَانًا سُوًى ﴿٥٨﴾

(20-58) We shall confront you with a sorcery like your own. So appoint a day when both of us might meet face to face in an open space; an appointment which neither we nor you shall fail to keep."

قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمُ الزِّيْنَةِ وَاَنْ يُّحْشَرَ النَّاسُ ضُحًى ﴿٥٩﴾

(20-59) Moses said: "The appointment to meet you is on the Day of the Feast and let all people come together before noon." (31)

(31) The object of Pharaoh was this: Once the sorcerers are able to transform the staffs and ropes into serpents, the entire effect of the miracle performed by Moses (peace be upon him) would disappear from the people’s minds. That was exactly to Moses’ (peace be upon him) advantage, who suggested that it was no good fixing an ordinary day or place for the purpose. The Day of the Feast was at hand. People would flock on that occasion from all corners of the empire. Therefore, the encounter should be held in the open so that all might witness it, and in the day time so that everyone should be able to see it clearly.

فَتَوَلّٰى فِرْعَوْنُ فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهٗ ثُمَّ اَتٰى ﴿٦٠﴾

(20-60) Pharaoh went back and concerted all his stratagem and returned for the encounter. (32)

(32) Pharaoh and his courtiers considered the coming encounter as a decisive one as far as their own future was concerned and, therefore, they attached the utmost importance to it. Courtiers were sent throughout the country to muster round all the magicians wherever available. People were especially encouraged to come in the largest numbers to witness the magic skills so as to keep them immune from the awe inspired by the staff of Moses (peace be upon him). It was openly said that the fate of their religion hinged on the skill of their magicians. Their religion could survive only if they won, otherwise the religion of Moses (peace be upon him) would have its sway see (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayat 34-51).

Here one should bear in mind the fact that the religion of the royal family and the elite of Egypt was much different from that of the common people. They had separate gods and temples and different creeds and concepts about the life after death. They also differed in the practice of religion as well as in the ideologies. (Toynbee: A Study of History: Somervell's Abridgment Vols. I-VI, pp. 31-32). Moreover, there were sufficiently strong pockets of the population, who under the influence of various religious upheavals, were prone to prefer Monotheism to a creed of polytheism. Besides this, there was also a fairly large element of the worshipers of One God for the Israelites and their fellow believers were at least ten per cent of the total population. Pharaoh also remembered that about 150 years earlier a religious revolution had been brought about by Pharaoh Amenophis IV or Akhenaton (1377-1360 B.C.) by military force, which had abolished all deities except Aton, a single, universal god, which was worshiped by the king and his family. Though this religious revolution had been reversed later by another king, yet its influence retrained, and Pharaoh dreaded that Moses (peace be upon him) might bring about yet another revolution.

قَالَ لَهُم مُّوسٰى وَيۡلَكُمۡ لَا تَفۡتَرُوۡا عَلَى اللّٰهِ كَذِبًا فَيُسۡحِتَكُمۡ بِعَذَابٍ وَقَدۡ خَابَ مَنِ افۡتَرٰى ﴿۶۱﴾

(20-61) (At the time of the encounter) Moses said to them: (33) "Woe to you! Do not invent falsehoods against Allah (34) lest He destroy you with a scourge. Surely those who invent lies shall come to grief."

(33) The adversaries whom Prophet Moses addressed were Pharaoh and his courtiers who had dubbed him as a sorcerer, and not the common people, who had yet to see the encounter between him and the magicians.

(34) The inventing of lie was that they had dubbed Allah's Messenger as a sorcerer and his miracles as a piece of sorcery.

فَتَنَازَعُوۡۤا اَمۡرَهُمۡ بَيۡنَهُمۡ وَاَسَرُّوا النَّجۡوٰى ﴿۶۲﴾

(20-62) Thereupon they wrangled among themselves about the matter and conferred in secret. (35)

(35) This shows that those people felt in their hearts that their position was weak and knew that the miracle shown by Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) was not a piece of magic. Therefore, they had come for the encounter with hesitation and fear. But when the timely, sudden warning of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) shook them to the core, they began to debate the wisdom of holding the encounter on the Feast Day in an open place in the broad day light. For they thought that if they were defeated in the presence of the common people, all would come to know of the difference between magic and a miracle and they would lose the battle once for all.

قَالُوۡۤا اِنۡ هٰذٰنِ لَسٰحِرٰنِ يُرِيۡدٰنِ اَنۡ يُّخۡرِجٰكُمۡ مِّنۡ اَرۡضِكُمۡ بِسِحۡرِهِمَا وَيَذۡهَبَا بِطَرِيۡقَتِكُمُ الۡمُثۡلٰى ﴿۶۳﴾

(20-63) Some of them said: (36) "These two are magicians, who want to drive you out of your land with their magic and to destroy your excellent way of life. (37)

(36) Those who were of this view must have been a few fanatics of Pharaoh’s party who were prepared to go to any extent to oppose Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). Those people must have been preparing the public for a determined encounter, while the reasonable people among them must have been advising caution and restraint.

(37) Probably those people based their argument on two things:

(1) If their magicians would be able to turn their staffs into serpents, it would be a clear proof that Moses (peace be upon him) was a sorcerer.

(2) If, on the other hand, Moses (peace be upon him) won, the rulers would lose their country, and their ideal way of life, which reflected their culture, their arts, their civilization, their recreations, etc. would automatically come to an end. Therefore they should do all they could to defeat Moses (peace be upon him).

فَاَجۡمِعُوۡا كَيۡدَكُمۡ ثُمَّ ائۡتُوۡا صَفًّا ۚ وَقَدۡ اَفۡلَحَ الۡيَوۡمَ مَنِ اسۡتَعۡلٰى ﴿۶۴﴾

(20-64) So muster all your stratagem and come forth in a row. (38) Whoever prevails today shall triumph."

(38) They also urged them to present a united front and not to show their differences on the very occasion of the encounter. For, they argued, any hesitation and secret consultation before the very eyes of the public would show that they did not consider themselves to be in the right.

قَالُوۡا يٰمُوۡسٰۤى اِمَّاۤ اَنۡ تُلۡقِىَ وَاِمَّاۤ اَنۡ نَّكُوۡنَ اَوَّلَ مَنۡ اَلۡقٰى ﴿۶۵﴾

(20-65) The magicians (39) said: "Moses, will you throw down or shall we be the first to throw?"

(39) That confidence was subsequently restored among Pharaoh’s party by the speech of the head-strong people, and the magicians were asked to come into the field for the encounter.

قَالَ بَلۡ اَلۡقُوۡا ۚ فَاِذَا حِبَالُهُمۡ وَعِصِيُّهُمۡ يُخَيَّلُ اِلَيۡهِ مِنۡ سِحۡرِهِمۡ اَنَّهَا تَسۡعٰى ﴿۶۶﴾

(20-66) Moses replied: "No, let it be you to throw first." Then suddenly it appeared to Moses, owing to their magic, (40) as if their ropes and staffs were running.

(40) In (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 116), it was stated: When they threw down their devices they bewitched the eyes of the people and filled their hearts with terror. Here it is stated that it was not the common people alone who were terrified by their magic but Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) also suffered from its effect. He not only seemed to see that the staffs and cords were running about like serpents but he also felt a dread of them.

فَاَوۡجَسَ فِىۡ نَفۡسِهٖ خِيۡفَةً مُّوۡسٰى ﴿۶۷﴾

(20-67) So Moses' heart was filled with fear. (41)

(41) It appears that no sooner did Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) say: Cast down, the magicians immediately cast their staffs and cords and it seemed as if hundreds of serpents were running towards him, and he instinctively felt a dread of them. And there is nothing strange in this because a Prophet is after all a human being. Besides this, it is also possible that Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) apprehended that the demonstration of the magic might create a misunderstanding among the people about his miracle. This is also a proof that a Prophet too can be influenced by magic to a certain extent like the common people, though magicians have no power to produce any effect on his Prophethood or interfere with revelation, or misguide him. Therefore there is no reason why one should consider as false those traditions in which it has been stated that the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) suffered temporarily from the effect of magic.

قُ لۡنَا لَا تَخَفۡ اِنَّكَ اَنۡتَ الۡاَعۡلٰى ۶۸

(20-68) We said to him: "Have no fear; for it is you who will prevail.

وَ اَلۡ قِ مَا فِىۡ يَمِيۡنِكَ تَلۡ قَفۡ مَا صَنَعُوۡا ؕ اِنَّمَا صَنَعُوۡا كَيۡ دُ سٰحِرٍ ؕ وَ لَا يُفۡلِحُ السَّاحِرُ حَيۡثُ اَتٰى ۶۹

(20-69) And throw down what is in your right hand; it will swallow up all that they have wrought. They have wrought only a magician's stratagem. (42) A magician cannot come to any good, come whence he may."

(42) This is capable of two interpretations:

(1) The staff, which was turned into a dragon by a miracle, actually swallowed up all the staffs and cords which had been made to appear as serpents.

(2) The dragon of the staff did not actually swallow up the serpents of the magicians but wiped out the effect of their magic from these things and they again became ordinary cords and staffs.

We prefer the second interpretation because the wording of (Surahs Al-Araf, Ayat 117) and (Ash-Shuara, Ayat 45) is this: It swallowed up their false magic. And here the wording is: It will swallow up what they have crafted. Obviously, the staffs and cords were not their creation but the magic which had made them appear like serpents.

فَاُلۡقِىَ السَّحَرَةُ سُجَّدًا قَالُوۡۤا اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّ هٰرُوۡنَ وَ مُوۡسٰى ۷۰

(20-70) Eventually the magicians were impelled to fall down prostrate (43) and said: "We believe in the Lord of Moses and Aaron." (44)

(43) When they saw the power of the staff of Moses (peace be upon him), they involuntarily fell prostrate as if someone had

made them do so, because they were convinced that it was a miracle and not a feat of magic.

(44) This profession of faith by the magicians shows that everyone was aware of the basic object of the encounter. It was not an encounter between the feats of the magicians and those of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), but it was to decide whether the claim of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) that he was a Messenger of Allah was true or not. If this staff was actually turned into a dragon, it was by means of a miracle. On the other hand, Pharaoh intended to prove by the feats of his magicians that it was not a miracle but a feat of magic. Incidentally, this also shows that Pharaoh and his magicians and the common people fully understood the distinction between a miracle and a feat of magic. ,That is why when the magicians saw that it was a miracle shown by the power of Allah which had exposed their magic, they did not say that Moses (peace be upon him) was a more skillful magician, but straightway fell prostrate, saying: We believe in the Lord of Aaron and Moses.

It is obvious that the defeat turned the tables on Pharaoh who had himself arranged the encounter to expose Prophet Moses (peace be upon him). He had mustered all his magicians with a view to demonstrating before the public that there was nothing extraordinary in turning a staff into a serpent for this could be done by any magician. But the defeat of the magicians and their acknowledgment testified that Moses (peace be upon him) was really a Messenger of Allah and the transformation of the staff was not a feat of magic but a miracle.

قَالَ اٰمَنتُمۡ لَهٗ قَبۡلَ اَنۡ اٰذَنَ لَكُمۡ ؕ اِنَّهٗ لَكَبِيۡرُكُمُ الَّذِىۡ عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحۡرَ ۚ فَلَاُقَطِّعَنَّ اَيۡدِيَكُمۡ وَ اَرۡجُلَكُمۡ مِّنۡ خِلَافٍ وَّلَاُصَلِّبَنَّكُمۡ فِىۡ جُذُوۡعِ النَّخۡلِ ۫ وَ لَتَعۡلَمُنَّ اَيُّنَاۤ اَشَدُّ عَذَابًا وَّ اَبۡقٰى ۷۱

(20-71) Pharaoh said: "What! Did you believe in Him even before I permitted you to do so? Surely, he must be your chief who taught you magic. (45) Now I will certainly cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, (46) and will crucify you on

the trunks of palm-trees, [47] and then you will come to know which of us can inflict sterner and more lasting torment." [48]

(45) In(Surah Al-Araf, Ayat, 123), it has been stated: Indeed it was a plot you conspired in the city to deprive the rightful owners of their power. Here the same thing has been further explained, as if to say: It is not merely a plot between you and him but it appears that Moses is your master and leader. You conspired beforehand that you would be defeated by your master in the encounter to prove that he was a Messenger who had shown the miracle of the staff to frustrate your magic and bring about a political revolution in the country.

(46) That is, right hand and left foot or vice versa.

(47) This was a very cruel way of punishment in ancient times. They fixed a long pole in the ground or used the trunk of a tree for this purpose. Then a piece of wood was tied across it at the top. Then the hands of the criminal were nailed on to it and he was left hanging there for hours to die a slow, painful death.

(48) This was the last trick played by Pharaoh to win the losing game. He held out the threat of a cruel punishment in order to coerce them to admit that there really was a conspiracy between Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and them against the kingdom. But the fortitude and determination of the magicians turned the tables on him. The very fact that, they were ready to endure the terrible punishment proved to the world that they had sincerely believed in the Prophethood of Moses (peace be upon him) and that the charge of conspiracy was an impudent trick that had been invented as a device.

قَالُوْا لَنْ نُّؤْثِرَكَ عَلٰى مَا جَآءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنٰتِ وَ الَّذِيْ فَطَرَنَا فَاقْضِ مَا اَنْتَ قَاضٍ ؕ اِنَّمَا تَقْضِيْ هٰذِهِ الْحَيٰوةَ الدُّنْيَا ؕ ۷۲

(20-72) The magicians answered: "By Him Who has created us, we shall never prefer you to the Truth after manifest Signs have come to us. [49] So decree whatever you will. Your decree will pertain, at the most, to the present life of the world.

(49) It may also be interpreted like this: It cannot be that we should prefer you to these plain signs which have come before us and to that Being Who has created us.

اِنَّـآ اٰمَنَّا بِرَبِّنَا لِيَغۡفِرَ لَنَا خَطٰيٰنَا وَمَآ اَكۡرَهۡتَنَا عَلَيۡهِ مِنَ السِّحۡرِ ؕ وَاللّٰهُ خَيۡرٌ وَّاَبۡقٰى ﴿۷۳﴾

(20-73) We believe in our Lord that He may forgive us our sins and also forgive us the practice of magic to which you had compelled us. Allah is the Best and He alone will abide."

اِنَّهٗ مَنۡ يَّاۡتِ رَبَّهٗ مُجۡرِمًا فَاِنَّ لَهٗ جَهَنَّمَ ؕ لَا يَمُوۡتُ فِيۡهَا وَلَا يَحۡيٰى ﴿۷۴﴾

(20-74) The truth is (50) that Hell awaits him who comes to his Lord laden with sin; he shall neither die in it nor live. (51)

(50) This is a saying of Allah, which has been added to the foregoing words of the magicians.

(51) This is the most terrible of all the punishments that have been mentioned in the Quran. The criminal will prefer death to the horrible life in Hell, but death will not come to him. He will remain in that state of agony without any hope of relief from it.

وَمَنۡ يَّاۡتِهٖ مُؤۡمِنًا قَدۡ عَمِلَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ فَاُولٰٓئِكَ لَهُمُ الدَّرَجٰتُ الۡعُلٰى ﴿۷۵﴾

(20-75) But he who comes to Him with faith and righteous works shall be exalted to high ranks,

جَنّٰتُ عَدۡنٍ تَجۡرِىۡ مِنۡ تَحۡتِهَا الۡاَنۡهٰرُ خٰلِدِيۡنَ فِيۡهَا ؕ وَذٰلِكَ جَزٰٓؤُا مَنۡ تَزَكّٰى ﴿۷۶﴾

(20-76) and shall live for ever in everlasting Gardens beneath which rivers flow. Such will be the reward of those who purify themselves.

وَلَقَدۡ اَوۡحَيۡنَاۤ اِلٰى مُوۡسٰٓى ۙ اَنۡ اَسۡرِ بِعِبَادِىۡ فَاضۡرِبۡ لَهُمۡ طَرِيۡقًا فِى الۡبَحۡرِ يَبَسًا ۙ لَّا تَخٰفُ دَرَكًا وَّلَا تَخۡشٰى ﴿۷۷﴾

(20-77) Most certainly We [52] revealed to Moses: "Proceed with My servants in the night and strike for them a dry path in the sea. [53] Have no fear of being overtaken, nor be afraid of treading through the sea."

(52) Here the details of the events which happened during the long period of Prophet Moses'(peace be upon him) stay in Egypt have been omitted. For these please see (Surah Al- Araf, Ayat 130-147), (Surah Younus, Ayats 83-92); (Surah Al-Momin, Ayats 23-50) and (Surah Az-Zukhuruf 46-56).

(53) This happened when God at last appointed a night for the exodus of the Israelites and the other Muslims from Egypt. They were asked to gather at a fixed place and set forth as a caravan. Just at the time when they reached the coast of the Red Sea from where they had to cross to the Sinai Peninsula, Pharaoh arrived there with a large army in their pursuit. We learn from (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 61-63) that when they were literally between the army and the deep sea, Allah commanded Moses (peace be upon him) to smite the sea with his staff and according to this verse the sea split and stood like two high walls on both sides, leaving a dry path between them for the caravan to pass. Thus, it is quite clear and plain that it was a miracle, and not the result of a wind storm or tide, for when the water rises in this way it does not remain standing like two high walls, leaving a dry path between them. (For details see (E.N. 47 of Surah Ash-Shuara).

فَاَ تۡبَعَهُمۡ فِرۡعَوۡنُ بِجُنُوۡدِهٖ فَغَشِيَهُمۡ مِّنَ الۡيَمِّ مَا غَشِيَهُمۡ ۞ ٧٨

(20-78) Pharaoh pursued them with his hosts, but they were fully overwhelmed by the sea. [54]

(54) According to (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 64-66), Pharaoh with his hosts followed the caravan on the dry path and they all were drowned. In Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 50, it has been stated that the Israelites had reached the other shore and saw them drowning in the sea. From (Surah Younus, Ayats 90-92), we learn that Pharaoh professed to believe in God while he was drowning but this was rejected by God and he was told that his dead body would he

preserved for the coming generations to serve as a lesson for them.

وَ اَضَلَّ فِرۡعَوۡنُ قَوۡمَهٗ وَ مَا هَدٰى ﴿۷۹﴾

(20-79) Pharaoh led his people astray; he did not guide them aright. (55)

(55) This was a subtle warning to the disbelievers of Makkah, as if to say: Your chiefs and leaders are leading you on the same way on which Pharaoh led his people. Now you can see yourselves that he did not guide them aright.

In conclusion, it will be worthwhile to consider the version as given in the Bible, for this will make it plain that it is absolutely false and ridiculous to say that the Quran has copied these stories from the Israelite traditions. We learn from Exodus the following:

(1) According to 4: 2-5, the miracle of the staff was given to Prophet Moses, and in 4:17 he was instructed: And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs, but according to 7: 9, the same rod was transferred to Prophet Aaron and then it remained with him to work miracles.

(2) The first dialogue between Prophet Moses and Pharaoh has been given in Chapter 5, but there is no mention in it whatever of the doctrine of Tauhid was presented by Moses. In answer to Pharaoh's question: Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, Moses and Aaron merely said: The God of the Hebrews hath met with us. (5: 2-3).

(3) The encounter with the magicians has been summed up in a few sentences thus: And the Lord spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, When Pharaoh shall speak unto you, saying, Shew a miracle for you: then thou shalt say unto Aaron, Take thy rod, and cast it before Pharaoh, and it shall become a serpent. And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like

manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods. (7: 8-12).

When we compare this with the version of it in the Quran, it becomes obvious that the description in the Bible lacks the real essence of the whole encounter, for it does not mention that the encounter took place on the Day of the Feast in the open as a result of a regular challenge, and there is no mention at all that the magicians became believers in the Lord of Moses and Aaron and remained steadfast in their faith even in face of terrible threats.

(4) According to the Quran, Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) demanded full freedom and liberty for the Israelites, but according to the Bible his demand was only this: Let us go, we pray thee, three days' journey into the desert, and sacrifice unto the Lord our God. (5:3).

(5) In Chapters 11 to 14, the details of the events concerning the exodus from Egypt to the drowning of Pharaoh have been given. Though these contain some useful information and details about the events which have been briefly described in the Quran, they contain some strange contradictions as well. For instance, in 14:15-16 the staff (rod) again comes into the hands of Prophet Moses, who is commanded: Lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it, and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea. But in VV. 21-22, it is said: And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all the night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground. And the waters were a wall unto them, on their right hand, and on their left. It is not clear whether the sea was divided by a miracle or by a strong east wind which incidentally has never been known to divide the sea into two parts leaving a dry path between them.

It will also be worthwhile to make a study of these events as given in the Talmud. The Talmudic account differs from the Biblical version but is nearer to the one given in the Quran. A comparative study of the two clearly shows that the one is based

on direct revelation from Allah and the other on centuries old oral traditions which have been handed down from one generation to the other and thus considerably tampered with. (See H. Polano: The Talmud Selections, pp. 150-154).

يٰبَنِيۡۤ اِسۡرَآءِيۡلَ قَدۡ اَنۡجَيۡنٰكُمۡ مِّنۡ عَدُوِّكُمۡ وَ وٰعَدۡنٰكُمۡ جَانِبَ الطُّوۡرِ الۡاَيۡمَنَ وَ نَزَّلۡنَا عَلَيۡكُمُ الۡمَنَّ وَ السَّلۡوٰى ۸۰

(20-80) Children of Israel! (56) We saved you from your enemy and made a covenant with you on the right side of the Mount (57 & 58) and sent down on you manna and quails, (59)

(56) The part of the story relating to their journey from the Red Sea to the foot of Mount Toor has been omitted. This has already been given in (Surah Al-Araf, Ayats 138-147). It has also been stated there that the Israelites said to Moses: O Moses, make a god for us like the gods these people have. See (Surah Al-Araf, Ayat 138 and its E.N. 98).

(57) That is, on the eastern side of Toor.

(58) According to (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 51) and (Surah Al-Araf, Ayat 142), Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) and the chiefs of the Israelites were summoned to Mount Toor for receiving the divine commandments on stone tablets for the guidance of the people. See (E.N. 71 of Surah Al-Baqarah).

(59) For details please see (E.N. 73 of Surah Al-Baqarah)and (E.N. 119 of Surah Al-Araf). According to the Bible, manna and salva started being provided to the Israelites when they were passing through the wilderness between Elim and Sinai. According to Exodus, manna and salva were sent down thus.

And it came to pass, that at even the quails came up, and covered the camp: and in the morning the dew lay round about the host. And when the dew that lay was gone up, behold upon the face of the wilderness there lay a small round thing, as small as the hoar frost on the ground. And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, It is manna: for they wist

not what it was. And Moses said unto them, This is the bread which the Lord hath given you to eat. And the house of Israel called the name thereof manna: and it was like coriander seed, white; and the taste of it was like wafers made with honey. (16: 13-15, 31).

In Numbers, the following details have been given:

And the people went about, and gathered it, and ground it in mills, or beat it in a mortar, and baked it in pans, and made cakes of it: and the taste of it was as the taste of fresh oil. And when the dew fell upon the camp in the bight, the manna fell upon it. (11: 8-9).

كُلُوۡا مِنۡ طَيِّبٰتِ مَا رَزَقۡنٰكُمۡ وَ لَا تَطۡغَوۡا فِيۡهِ فَيَحِلَّ عَلَيۡكُمۡ غَضَبِىۡ وَمَنۡ يَّحۡلِلۡ عَلَيۡهِ غَضَبِىۡ فَقَدۡ هَوٰى ﴿۸۱﴾

(20-81) saying: "Partake of the good things that We have provided for you, but do not transgress lest My wrath fall upon you; for he upon whom My wrath falls is ruined.

وَ اِنِّىۡ لَغَفَّارٌ لِّمَنۡ تَابَ وَ اٰمَنَ وَ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهۡتَدٰى ﴿۸۲﴾

(20-82) But I am indeed Most Forgiving to him who repents and believes and does righteous works and keeps to the Right Way." (60)

(60) According to this (Verse 82), there are four conditions for forgiveness:

(1) Repentance: to refrain from rebellion, disobedience, shirk or disbelief.
(2) Faith: sincere belief in Allah and the Messenger and the Book and the Hereafter.
(3) Righteous works: to do good deeds according to the instructions of Allah and His Messenger.
(4) Guidance: to follow the right way steadfastly and to refrain from straying into any wrong path.

وَ مَا اَعۡجَلَکَ عَنۡ قَوۡمِکَ یٰمُوۡسٰی ﴿۸۳﴾

(20-83) "But, O Moses, (61) what has made you come in haste from your people?" (62)

(61) From here the same account is resumed that was interrupted by the parenthesis (Ayats 81-82). The Israelites were told to stay on the right side of Mount Toor, and they would be given the commandments after forty days.

(62) This shows that in his eagerness to see his Lord as soon as possible, Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) had left them in the way and reached the meeting place alone. For the details of that meeting the reader should see (Surah Al- Araf, Ayats 143-145). Here only that portion has been mentioned which is connected with the calf-worship by the Israelites. This has been stated here to bring home to the disbelievers of Makkah how idol-worship starts and how deeply a Prophet of Allah is concerned about this evil.

قَالَ هُمۡ اُولَآءِ عَلٰۤی اَثَرِیۡ وَ عَجِلۡتُ اِلَیۡکَ رَبِّ لِتَرۡضٰی ﴿۸۴﴾

(20-84) He said: "They are close behind me, and I hastened to You, Lord, that You may be pleased with me."

قَالَ فَاِنَّا قَدۡ فَتَنَّا قَوۡمَکَ مِنۡۢ بَعۡدِکَ وَ اَضَلَّهُمُ السَّامِرِیُّ ﴿۸۵﴾

(20-85) Said He: "Verily We tested your people in your absence and the Samiri (63) led them astray."

(63) It is obvious from the last Arabic letter ‘ya’ that Samiri was not the proper name of the person, for this Arabic letter is always added to show a person’s connection with his race or clan or place. Moreover, the prefix al (definite article ‘the’) in the original Arabic text clearly denotes that the Samiri was a particular man from among many other persons of the same race or clan or place, who had propagated the worship of the golden calf. In fact, this does not require any further explanation than this, but this has been necessitated because many Christian

missionaries and the Western Orientalists have tried to criticize the Prophet (peace be upon him) and the Quran on this account. They say, (God forbid,) "This is a proof of the grievous ignorance of history on the part of Muhammad (peace be upon him), the author of the Quran, and is one of the anachronisms of the Quran. They base this absurd criticism on the assumption that this Samiri was the inhabitant of Samaria, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Israel, which was built in 925 B.C. long after this happening; then centuries after this, a generation of the Samaritans came into existence as a result of inter-marriage between the Israelites and the non-Israelites. As the Samaritans worshiped the golden calf, the critics accuse the Prophet (peace be upon him) of inventing this story on the basis of mere hearsay. They say that the Prophet (peace be upon him) might have heard something like this from the neighboring Jews and inserted it in the Quran. That is not all. They also criticize that Haman who was a courtier of Cyrus has been mentioned in the Quran as a minister of Pharaoh. It is a pity that these so called scholars seem to think that in the ancient times there used to be only one person bearing one name in a clan or a place, and there was absolutely no possibility of another person or persons having the same name. They do not know, or pretend they do not know, that during the time of Prophet Abraham (peace be upon him), a famous people known as the Sumerians inhabited Iraq and the neighboring regions, and it is just possible that during the time of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) there were some people known as the Samiris who might have migrated to Egypt from Iraq. Besides this, according to the Bible (1 Kings, 16: 24), Samaria itself was built on a hill which was bought from Shemer and named Samaria after him. This is a clear proof that there were people named Shemer (or Sumer) even before Samaria came into existence and it is also just possible that some clans might have been called Samiri

فَرَجَعَ مُوسٰٓى اِلٰى قَوْمِهٖ غَضْبَانَ اَسِفًا ۚ قَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اَلَمْ يَعِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا ۗ اَفَطَالَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْعَهْدُ اَمْ اَرَدْتُّمْ اَنْ يَّحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّنْ رَّبِّكُمْ فَاَخْلَفْتُمْ مَّوْعِدِيْ ﴿٨٦﴾

(20-86) Moses returned to his people full of wrath and grief, and said: "My people! Has your Lord not made good an excellent promise He made to you? (64) And has a long time passed since those promises were fulfilled? (65) Or was it to incur the wrath of your Lord that you broke your promise with me?" (66)

(64) That is, did not Allah fulfill the promises He made with you of showing His favors to you? For instance, He safely brought you out of Egypt and not only freed you from the slavery of your enemy but also destroyed him totally. He provided you with provisions in the desert and in the mountainous regions. It may also be translated like this: Did not Allah make a good promise with you? In that case, it will mean: He made a promise that he will give you the law and guidance. Was this not a good promise for your well being and betterment?

(65) That is, had a long time passed since those great favors were done to you that you forgot them? Had long ages passed since you were afflicted with persecution by your enemy that you committed such a blasphemy? It may also be translated like this: Had you to wait for a long time for the fulfillment of God's promise that you became so impatient? In that case, the meaning is obvious: You had not to wait for a long time to see the fulfillment of the promise of guidance. Therefore there was no excuse for what you did.

(66) This covenant was the one which every community makes with its Prophet and promises that it will steadfastly follow the guidance brought by him and will not worship anyone except Allah.

قَالُوْا مَآ اَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلْكِنَا وَلٰكِنَّا حُمِّلْنَآ اَوْزَارًا مِّنْ زِيْنَةِ الْقَوْمِ فَقَذَفْنٰهَا فَكَذٰلِكَ اَلْقَى السَّامِرِيُّ ۝٨٧

(20-87) They answered: "We did not break our promise with you out of our own volition; but we were laden with the load of people's ornaments, and we simply threw them down (67) (into the fire), and (68) the Samiri also threw down something,

(67) This excuse was put forward by those people who were involved in the shirk fabricated by the Samiri. They meant to say: We did not throw down the ornaments with the intention of setting up a calf nor did we know what was going to be made of these, but when the calf was brought before us, we involuntarily got involved in shirk. The Arabic text which we have translated into: “We were laden with burdens of ornaments of the people”, simply means this: The heavy ornaments which our men and women were wearing like the Egyptians proved very burdensome to us in our wanderings in the desert and we did not know how to get rid of them for it appeared very difficult for us to travel in the desert with them. But according to the Bible these ornaments had been borrowed by every family of the Israelites from their Egyptian neighbors with this intention, “....and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters and ye shall spoil the Egyptians....and let every man borrow of his neighbor, and every woman of her neighbor, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold....And the Lord gave the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians....so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians.” And that, too, on the advice of Prophet Moses, whom God Himself had instructed to do this noble deed. (Exodus, 3: 14-22, 11: 2-3, and I 2: 35-36).

It is a pity that some of our commentators have interpreted this verse in the light of the above traditions of the Bible. They say that the Israelites felt burdened with the weight of those ornaments which they had borrowed from their Egyptian neighbors, with the intention of carrying them away as a spoil bestowed by God.

We are of the opinion that the clause of the verse under discussion means this: When the people were tired of carrying their ornaments on their bodies, they decided by mutual consultation that all the ornaments should be gathered at one place and it should be noted down how much gold and silver belonged to each of the owners. Then it should be melted into bars and rods and placed on the backs of the beasts of burden. Accordingly, they might have brought their ornaments and thrown them in the common heap.

(68) It is obvious from the context that the answer of the people ended with “threw them”, and Allah Himself has added the remaining story up to the end of the paragraph. It appears from this that the people including the Samiri went on bringing their ornaments and throwing them down into the heap while they were absolutely unaware of what was going to be done by the Samiri. After this the Samiri offered his services to melt it. Then he shaped it into a calf which lowed like a cow. Thus the Samiri deluded the people, saying: This god of yours has come into being by itself for I had simply thrown the gold in the fire.

فَاَخۡرَجَ لَهُمۡ عِجۡلًا جَسَدًا لَّهٗ خُوَارٌ فَقَالُوۡا هٰذَاۤ اِلٰهُكُمۡ وَ اِلٰهُ مُوۡسٰى فَنَسِىَ ؕ ۸۸

(20-88) and brought out of there (from the molten gold) the effigy of a calf that lowed." The people cried out: "This is your deity and the deity of Moses, whom Moses has forgotten."

اَفَلَا يَرَوۡنَ اَلَّا يَرۡجِعُ اِلَيۡهِمۡ قَوۡلًا ۙ وَّ لَا يَمۡلِكُ لَهُمۡ ضَرًّا وَّ لَا نَفۡعًا ۸۹

(20-89) Did they not see that it did not return a word to them, and had no power either to hurt them or to cause them any benefit?

وَ لَقَدۡ قَالَ لَهُمۡ هٰرُوۡنُ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ يٰقَوۡمِ اِنَّمَا فُتِنۡتُمۡ بِهٖ ۚ وَ اِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ الرَّحۡمٰنُ فَاتَّبِعُوۡنِىۡ وَ اَطِيۡعُوۡۤا اَمۡرِىۡ ۹۰

(20-90) Certainly Aaron had said to them even before (the return of Moses): "My people, you were fallen into error because of the calf. Surely your Lord is Most Compassionate; so follow me and obey my command."

قَالُوۡا لَنۡ نَّبۡرَحَ عَلَيۡهِ عٰكِفِيۡنَ حَتّٰى يَرۡجِعَ اِلَيۡنَا مُوۡسٰى ۹۱

(20-91) But they answered: "By no means shall we cease to worship it until Moses returns to us." (69)

(69) Here the Quran exonerates Prophet Aaron (peace be upon him) from the sin of taking any part in the calfworship, but

in contrast to this, the Bible makes him wholly responsible for making the golden calf and setting it up as a god. According to Exodus:

> And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people broke off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at his hand, and fashioned it with a graying tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord. (1,32: 1-5).

It is just possible that the real name of the Samiri was also Aaron which later on might have misled the Israelites to attribute the making of the golden calf to Prophet Aaron. Thus it is obvious that the Quran has shown a favor to the Jews and Christians by exonerating Prophet Aaron from the sin, but it is an irony that the Christian missionaries and the Orientalists still insist that the Quran is guilty of anachronism and that the calf was made a deity of worship by a holy prophet of theirs. In their blind obduracy they forget that even according to the Bible this was a great sin. (Exodus, 32: 21). A little further on in the same chapter the Bible again contradicts itself. It says that Prophet Moses ordered the Levites to kill all their kinsfolk, their friends and their fellow countrymen who had been guilty of the sin of calf-worship. Accordingly, about three thousand men fell that day. (Exodus, 32: 27-29).

Now the question arises: Why was Prophet Aaron not killed, if he was the inventor of the calf-worship? Why didn’t the Levites ask Prophet Moses to kill his brother, Prophet Aaron, who

was the real sinner, just as they were asked to kill theirs. The Bible also says that after this Moses went back to the Eternal and prayed Him to forgive their sins or blot him out of His list of the living, and the Eternal answered: Whosoever has sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book (Exodus, 32: 31-33). But we learn from the Bible that the name of Prophet Aaron was not blotted out, but, on the other hand, he and his sons and his family were given the charge of the sanctuary and the office of priesthood (Numbers, 18: 1-7). Thus it is quite evident from the internal testimony of the Bible itself, that it contradicts itself and supports the Quran in its exoneration of Prophet Aaron.

قَالَ يٰهٰرُوْنُ مَا مَنَعَكَ اِذْ رَاَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوْٓا ﴿٩٢﴾

(20-92) (After rebuking his people) Moses turned to Aaron and said: "Aaron! What prevented you, when you saw them going astray,

اَلَّا تَتَّبِعَنِ ؕ اَفَعَصَيْتَ اَمْرِيْ ﴿٩٣﴾

(20-93) from following my way? Have you disobeyed my command?" (70)

(70) The “command” refers to the instructions which Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) gave to his brother Prophet Aaron (peace be upon him) when he made him his deputy in his absence when he went up to Mount Toor: After me take my place and do the right and follow not the way of the mischief-makers. (Surah Al-Araf, Ayat 142).

قَالَ يَبْنَؤُمَّ لَا تَاْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِيْ وَلَا بِرَاْسِيْ ۚ اِنِّيْ خَشِيْتُ اَنْ تَقُوْلَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِيْٓ اِسْرَآءِيْلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِيْ ﴿٩٤﴾

(20-94) Aaron answered: "Son of my mother! Do not seize me with my beard, nor by (the hair of) my head. (71) I feared that on returning you might say: 'You sowed discord among the Children of Israel, and did not pay heed to my words.'" (72)

(71) See (Surah Al-Araf, Ayat 150).

(72) It can also be interpreted like this: You did not wait for orders from me. In order to understand fully the statement of Prophet Aaron (peace be upon him), one should read this verse along with (Verse 150 of Surah Al-Araf), where he says: Son of my mother, these people overpowered me and were going to kill me. So, let not the enemies gloat over me. Do not count me among the people who have done wrong. Now if both these verses are read together, one can easily see the true picture of the event. Prophet Aaron (peace be upon him) did his utmost to stop the people from committing the sin of calf-worship, but they revolted against him and might even have killed him. Fearing a clash between them, therefore, he held his peace lest Prophet Moses (peace be upon him), on his return, might blame him for letting the situation worsen and failing to control it effectively in his absence. The last clause of (Surah Al-Araf, Ayat 150) also gives the hint that there existed among the people a good number of the enemies of the two brothers.

قَالَ فَمَا خَطۡبُكَ يٰسَامِرِىُّ ﴿٩٥﴾

(20-95) Moses said: "What, then, is your case, O Samiri?"

قَالَ بَصُرۡتُ بِمَا لَمۡ يَبۡصُرُوۡا بِهٖ فَقَبَضۡتُ قَبۡضَةً مِّنۡ اَثَرِ الرَّسُوۡلِ فَنَبَذۡتُهَا وَ كَذٰلِكَ سَوَّلَتۡ لِىۡ نَفۡسِىۡ ﴿٩٦﴾

(20-96) He answered: "I saw what the people did not see. So I took a handful of dust from the trail of the Messenger, and I flung it (into the fire). Thus did my mind prompt me." (73)

(73) Here it has been a good deal of divergence of opinion in regard to the interpretation of this verse. According to the majority of the early commentators and their followers, it means: The Samiri saw the Messenger (Angel Gabriel) when he was passing and took a handful of dust from his footprints. Then he sprinkled this upon the idol of the golden calf. This created life in it and it began to low like a living calf. The Quran, in fact, does not say that this actually happened but merely cites the reply given

by the Samiri to Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) when the latter took him to task for the great sin he had committed.

There are others who interpret the words of the Samiri like this: I saw a weakness in the Messenger (Prophet Moses) or in his creed, which others did not see. Therefore I followed in his footsteps to a certain limit but afterwards I left his way. This interpretation was most probably put forward first of all by Abu Muslim Isfahani. Then Imam Razi not only cited it in his own commentary but also approved of it. And now it is being followed by some modernistic commentators, who try to prove their own favorite theories by giving far-fetched interpretations to the obvious meaning of the words of the Quran. Such people forget that the Quran has not been sent down in the terminology of enigmas, riddles and puzzles but in clear, plain and intelligible Arabic. Therefore the Quran would have never employed the words it has used in the text to convey the meaning given by them because their usage cannot support that far-fetched interpretation. What such interpreters really mean to imply is that Allah has failed to express Himself clearly and plainly; therefore, they wish to come to His rescue by their interpretations in order to save Him from the ridicule of the learned people.

If we study the verse in the context in which it occurs, we shall be able to understand easily that the Samiri was a mischief-monger who had contrived his deceitful scheme after a good deal of consideration. As he appears to have been a good craftsman, he caused the golden calf he had made to produce a lowing sound, and successfully deluded the ignorant and simple people. He did not rest content with this but impudently invented the story that he had seen what the common people could not see and that he had taken a handful of the dust from the footprints of the Messenger and sprinkled it on the calf which made it low like a living calf. It is possible that by the Messenger, he meant Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) himself and might have cunningly tried to flatter him, saying, that the dust of his footprints was miraculous. By saying so, he was playing the most subtle trick. He wanted to offer an intellectual bait to Moses (peace be upon him) so that he might feel elated about the

miraculous effect of the dust trodden by his feet and utilize his services for propagating his own miraculous acts. Anyhow, the fact is that the Quran has presented the whole thing as a trick of the Samiri and has not given the account as if it were a real event by itself. The subsequent reaction of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) to the statement of the Samiri clearly shows that he considered it as a deceitful story, and so laid the curse on him.

قَالَ فَاذۡهَبۡ فَاِنَّ لَكَ فِى الۡحَيٰوةِ اَنۡ تَقُوۡلَ لَا مِسَاسَ ۖ وَاِنَّ لَكَ مَوۡعِدًا لَّنۡ تُخۡلَفَهٗ ۚ وَانۡظُرۡ اِلٰٓى اِلٰهِكَ الَّذِىۡ ظَلۡتَ عَلَيۡهِ عَاكِفًا ؕ لَنُحَرِّقَنَّهٗ ثُمَّ لَنَنۡسِفَنَّهٗ فِى الۡيَمِّ نَسۡفًا ﴿۹۷﴾

(20-97) Moses said: "Be gone, then. All your life you shall cry: 'Untouchable.' (74) There awaits a term for your reckoning that you cannot fail to keep. Now look at your god that you devotedly adored: We shall burn it and scatter its remains in the sea.

(74) The words show that he was not only made an outcast for life but was made to inform the people himself that he was an outcast, as given in Leviticus:

And the leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head bare, and he shall put a covering upon his upper lip, and shall cry, unclean, unclean. All the days wherein the plague shall be in him he shall be defiled; he is unclean: he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his habitation be. (13: 45-46).

We conclude from this that either he was inflicted with leprosy as a scourge by Allah or the punishment inflicted on him was that, being a moral "leper", he should be made an outcast and should himself proclaim to be an unclean and impure person, saying: Touch me not.

اِنَّمَاۤ اِلٰهُكُمُ اللّٰهُ الَّذِىۡ لَاۤ اِلٰهَ اِلَّا هُوَ ؕ وَسِعَ كُلَّ شَىۡءٍ عِلۡمًا ﴿۹۸﴾

(20-98) Your God is none else than Allah, beside Whom there is no god. His knowledge embraces everything."

كَذٰلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيۡكَ مِنۡ اَنۡۢبَآءِ مَا قَدۡ سَبَقَ ۚ وَ قَدۡ اٰتَيۡنٰكَ مِنۡ لَّدُنَّا ذِكۡرًا ۙ﴿۹۹﴾

(20-99) (O Muhammad), [75] thus do We recount to you the events of the past, and We have bestowed upon you from Ourself an admonition. [76]

(75) Now that the story of Prophet Moses (peace be upon him) comes to an end, the same theme, that was interrupted by this story, has been resumed.

(76) That is, the Quran about which it was said at the beginning of the Surah that it had not been sent down to put the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) in distress, and that it was an admonition for the God-fearing.

مَنۡ اَعۡرَضَ عَنۡهُ فَاِنَّهٗ يَحۡمِلُ يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ وِزۡرًا ۙ﴿۱۰۰﴾

(20-100) He who turns away from it will surely bear a heavy burden on the Day of Resurrection,

خٰلِدِيۡنَ فِيۡهِ ؕ وَ سَآءَ لَهُمۡ يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ حِمۡلًا ۙ﴿۱۰۱﴾

(20-101) and will abide under this burden for ever. Grievous shall be the burden on the Day of Resurrection, [77]

(77) Here the people have been warned that whoso will turn away front the Quran and will reject its guidance, he shall do harm to himself only and not to Allah and His Messenger, and that the one, who rejects His Message, shall inevitably be punished in the Hereafter. And this warning holds good for every people, every country and every age. This is because there are only two alternatives for an individual or a community, whom the message of the Quran reaches. They can either accept it or reject it, there is no third way.

يَّوۡمَ يُنۡفَخُ فِى الصُّوۡرِ ؕ وَ نَحۡشُرُ الۡمُجۡرِمِيۡنَ يَوۡمَئِذٍ زُرۡقًا ۙ﴿۱۰۲﴾

(20-102) the Day when the Trumpet shall be sounded (78) and We shall muster the sinners, their eyes turned blue with terror. (79)

(78) As regards to the nature of the blowing of the Trumpet on the Day of Resurrection, it may be likened to the blowing of the bugle in the army to muster or disperse the soldiers. It is obvious that these words and terms have been used because these are known to the people. Therefore it will be wrong to consider the Trumpet to be exactly like the bugles and trumpets of this world.

(79) According to some commentators, it means this: The bodies of the criminals will turn white as if no drop of blood had been left in them.

يَّتَخَافَتُوْنَ بَيْنَهُمْ اِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ اِلَّا عَشْرًا ﴿١٠٣﴾

(20-103) They shall whisper among themselves: "You stayed on the earth barely ten days." (80)

(80) The original text may also be interpreted to mean: After your death, you may have passed hardly ten days till now. As regards to the interpretation adopted in the translation, it is supported by (Surah Ash-Shuara, Ayats 112-113): When Allah will ask them, for how many years did you stay on the earth? They will say: We stayed there for a day or part of a day. You may ask those who have kept the record. The second interpretation is supported by (Surah Ar-Room, Ayats 55-56): And on the day when Resurrection will take place, the criminals will declare under oaths: We have not remained in the state of death for more than an hour. And likewise they were deluded on the earth. On the other hand, those who have been given knowledge and faith will say: According to the Book of Allah, you have remained in this state up to the Day of Resurrection, and this is the very Day of Resurrection, but you did not know of it. Both the interpretations are supported by other verses of the Quran. It is clear from these that they will consider both the life on the earth and the life in the interval between death and Resurrection to be very short. They will consider the

earthly life to be very short because, against all their expectations, they will have to face the eternal life in the Hereafter which they denied in their earthly life. As they had made no preparation for this life, they will regret that they had ruined their eternal life for the sake of a few transitory pleasures of the short life they had been given on the earth. As regards to the duration of the interval between death and Resurrection, they will consider it to be very short, for they will imagine that they had been suddenly awakened by the Trumpet from their last sleep or unconsciousness in their earthly life. Thus, they will not at first realize that the Trumpet was the signal for the Day of Resurrection because they had no expectation whatever that the Day of Resurrection would ever come. As a matter of fact, they used to make fun of this Day as a nonsensical thing.

نَحۡنُ اَعۡلَمُ بِمَا يَقُوۡلُوۡنَ اِذۡ يَقُوۡلُ اَمۡثَلُهُمۡ طَرِيۡقَةً اِنۡ لَّبِثۡتُمۡ اِلَّا يَوۡمًا ﴿۱۰۴﴾

(20-104) We know well [81] what they will say to one another: We also know that even the most cautious in his estimate will say: "You lived in the world no more than a day." [82]

(81) This is a parenthesis that has been inserted to remove this doubt of the hearers: How has it been known today what the people will be talking in whispers on the Day of Resurrection?

(82) This is another parenthesis which has been inserted in answer to another objection raised by some hearer. It appears that when this Surah was being recited, someone might have raised this question as a ridicule: Where will these high mountains go on the Day of Resurrection, for it appears from your description of Resurrection that all the people of the world will be running about in a level plain? In order to understand the background of the question, it should be kept in mind that Makkah, where this Surah was first recited on the occasion of its revelation, is surrounded on all sides by high mountains. The answer to this question follows immediately: Allah will reduce them to fine dust and scatter it away.

وَيَسۡـَٔلُوۡنَكَ عَنِ الۡجِبَالِ فَقُلۡ يَنۡسِفُهَا رَبِّىۡ نَسۡفًا ﴿۱۰۵﴾

(20-105) They ask you concerning the mountains: "Where will they go?" Say: "My Lord will scatter them like dust,

فَيَذَرُهَا قَاعًا صَفْصَفًا ﴿١٠٦﴾

(20-106) and leave the earth a levelled plain

لَّا تَرَىٰ فِيهَا عِوَجًا وَلَا أَمْتًا ﴿١٠٧﴾

(20-107) in which you shall find no crookedness or curvature. (83)

(83) According to the Quran, the earth will take a new shape in the Hereafter:
The earth will be spread. (Surah Al-Inshiqaq, Ayat 3).

The bottoms of the oceans will be split (and the whole water will sink down in the earth). (Surah Al-Infitar, Ayat 3).

The oceans will be filled up. (Surah At-Takweer, Ayat 6).

The mountains will be reduced to fine dust and scattered away and there will be left no curve or crease in the earth. (Surah Taaha, Ayats 105-107).

On that day the earth will be totally changed. (Surah Ibrahim, Ayat 48).

And it will be turned into a garden and given to the pious people to dwell therein forever. (Surah Az-Zumur, Ayat 74).

This shows that ultimately this earth will be turned into Paradise which will be inherited by the pious and righteous servants of Allah. The whole earth will become one country, and there will be no mountains, oceans, rivers and deserts which today divide it into countless countries and homelands and divide mankind as well into as many tribes, races and classes. Ibn Abbas

and Qatadah have the same view that Paradise will be established on this very earth.

وَ مَئِذٍ يَّتَّبِعُوْنَ الدَّاعِىَ لَا عِوَجَ لَ ۚ وَ خَشَعَتِ ا طَ ۡ وَاتُ لِلرَّ ۡ مٰنِ فَلَا تَسۡمَعُ اِلَّا ۡ سًا ١٠٨

(20-108) On that Day people shall follow straight on to the call of the summoner, no one daring to show any haughtiness. Their voices shall be hushed before the Most Compassionate Lord, so that you will hear nothing but a whispering murmur. (84)

(84) The original Arabic word hams is used for the sound of footsteps, the sound of whispering and other low sounds. What it implies here is that the people will be so awestricken on that Day that there will be no sound other than that of footsteps and whispering.

يَوۡمَئِذٍ لَّا تَنۡفَعُ الشَّفَاعَةُ اِلَّا مَنۡ اَذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحۡمٰنُ وَ رَضِىَ لَهٗ قَوۡلًا ١٠٩

(20-109) On that Day intercession shall not avail save of him whom the Most Compassionate Lord permits, and whose word of intercession is pleasing to Him. (85)

(85) This also has another interpretation: On that Day intercession will not be effective except in the case of the one for whom the Merciful may allow it and be pleased to hear it for him. Both these interpretations are supported by the following:

Who is there that can intercede with Him except by His own permission? (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayat 255).

On that Day when the spirit and the angels will stand with folded hands, they will not be able to say anything except what the Merciful will permit, and they will say the right thing. (Surah An-Naba, Ayat 38). They do not intercede for anyone except for whom the Merciful may be pleased to listen to, and they are always fearful of Him. (Surah Al-Anbia, Ayat 28).

There are many angels in the heavens whose intercession avails nothing at all except when it is made after getting permission from Allah, and for the one for whom He wills to hear and approves of it. (Surah An-Najam, Ayat 26).

يَعۡلَمُ مَا بَيۡنَ اَيۡدِيۡهِمۡ وَ مَا خَلۡفَهُمۡ وَ لَا يُحِيۡطُوۡنَ بِهٖ عِلۡمًا ﴿۱۱۰﴾

(20-110) He knows all that is ahead of them and all that is behind them, while the others do not know. (86)

(86) Here the reasons for the restrictions on intercession have been stated. On the one hand, no angel, no prophet, no saint, nor anyone else knows, nor can know, the full details about the records of others. On the other hand, Allah has full knowledge of all the deeds and misdeeds of everyone and He knows who deserves pardon or punishment, and how much. If, therefore, there had been full freedom for intercession, the whole purpose of the creation of man would have become meaningless. According to this verse, the door against intercession has not been entirely closed. The righteous people will be allowed to show their sympathy for other human beings as they did in the world, but they will have to get permission for this beforehand and even then make only a right sort of recommendation.

وَ عَنَتِ الۡوُجُوۡهُ لِلۡحَىِّ الۡقَيُّوۡمِ ؕ وَ قَدۡ خَابَ مَنۡ حَمَلَ ظُلۡمًا ﴿۱۱۱﴾

(20-111) All faces shall be humbled before the Ever-Living, the Self-Subsisting Lord, and he who bears the burden of iniquity will have failed;

وَ مَنۡ يَّعۡمَلۡ مِنَ الصّٰلِحٰتِ وَ هُوَ مُؤۡمِنٌ فَلَا يَخٰفُ ظُلۡمًا وَّ لَا هَضۡمًا ﴿۱۱۲﴾

(20-112) but whosoever does righteous works, being a believer, shall have no fear of suffering wrong or loss." (87)

(87) From this, it is clear that in the Hereafter the case of every individual will be decided on merits. If a man had been guilty of iniquity and injustice in regard to the rights of God or the rights of man or even his own rights, he shall be dealt with

accordingly. On the other hand, those, who are both believers and workers of righteous deeds, shall have no fear that they would be deprived of their rights or punished even though they were innocent.

وَ كَذٰلِكَ اَنۡزَلۡنٰهُ قُرۡاٰنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَّ صَرَّفۡنَا فِيۡهِ مِنَ الۡوَعِيۡدِ لَعَلَّهُمۡ يَتَّقُوۡنَ اَوۡ يُحۡدِثُ لَهُمۡ ذِكۡرًا ﴿۲۰:۱۱۳﴾

(20-113) (O Muhammad), thus have We revealed this as an Arabic Qur'an (88) and have expounded in it warning in diverse ways so that they may avoid evil or become heedful. (89)

(88) This means that the Quran is full of such high themes, wise teachings and admonitions as are contained in the preceding portion of this Surah as well as in the other Surahs of the Book.

(89) That is, the Arabic Quran might awaken them from their heedlessness and they might recollect the forgotten lessons and feel that they are going astray and might realize the consequences thereof.

فَتَعٰلَى اللّٰهُ الۡمَلِكُ الۡحَقُّ ۚ وَ لَا تَعۡجَلۡ بِالۡقُرۡاٰنِ مِنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ يُّقۡضٰۤى اِلَيۡكَ وَحۡيُهٗ ۫ وَ قُلۡ رَّبِّ زِدۡنِىۡ عِلۡمًا ﴿۲۰:۱۱۴﴾

(20-114) Exalted is Allah, the True King! (90) Hasten not with reciting the Qur'an before its revelation to you is finished, and pray: "Lord! Increase me in knowledge." (91)

(90) Such sentences as this are usually found in the Quran at the end of a discourse so that it may end with the praise of Allah. It is plain from the context that the discourse ends with “the Sovereign.”

(91) At the end of the discourse, the angel cautions the Prophet (peace be upon him) by Allah’s command to guard against a thing that had been noticed during the revelation, for it was not considered appropriate to do so during its recital. It is obvious from the wording of the caution that the Prophet (peace

be upon him) was trying to learn the revealed discourse and was repeating it during its recital by the angel. Naturally this might have diverted his attention over and over again from listening to and grasping the revelation. Therefore it was felt necessary that he should be taught the right method of the receipt of the message of revelation and be asked not to try to commit it to memory during the revelation.

This sentence shows that this portion of Surah TaaHa is one of the earliest revelations, for we learn from the other early Surahs that the Prophet (peace be upon him) tried to commit to memory the Quranic revelation and Allah cautioned him against it. For instance in (Surah Al-Qiamah, Ayats 16-19), he was told: Do not move your tongue over and over again in order to learn the revelation, for it is Our responsibility to cause you to remember it by heart and recite it. Therefore when it is being recited to you, listen to it carefully. Then it is also Our responsibility to make its meanings clear to you.
Again in (Surah Al-Aala, Ayat 6), he was assured: We will teach you how to recite it and you will not forget it. It appears that afterwards when the Prophet (peace be upon him) had learnt how to receive the messages of revelation, this did not occur. That is why there is no such caution in the Surahs of the later period.

وَ لَقَدۡ عَہِدۡنَاۤ اِلٰۤی اٰدَمَ مِنۡ قَبۡلُ فَنَسِیَ وَ لَمۡ نَجِدۡ لَہٗ عَزۡمًا ﴿۱۱۵﴾

(20-115) Most certainly We (92) had given Adam a command before, (93) but he forgot. We found him lacking in firmness of resolution. (94)

(92) From here begins a new discourse, which probably was revealed some time after the preceding discourse see (E.N. 90), and it was incorporated in this Surah by the command of Allah because both deal with the same theme. The following are the similarities between the two:

(1) Both the discourses remind mankind of the forgotten lesson, the admonition, which Allah had taught man on the occasion of his creation.

(2) Both teach that it is Satan who seduces man to forget that lesson. He succeeded in this by causing his first parents to forget it. Since then he has been forgetting it over and over again and, therefore, has been cautioned against this.

(3) Both warn man that his ultimate success or failure depends upon his attitude towards this admonition.

(4) Both warn mankind to discriminate between an inadvertent error and an intentional rebellion and their consequences. If man (like Prophet Adam and his offspring and the magicians of Pharaoh) realizes that he has been seduced by Satan, his eternal enemy, and then repents of his error, he is forgiven. But there is no forgiveness for intentional rebellion as was the case with Satan, Pharaoh and the Samiri.

(93) The story of Prophet Adam has already been stated in (Surah Al-Baqarah, Ayats 30-39); (Surah Al-Araf, Ayats 11- 27, 189); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 28-42); (Surah Al-Isra, Ayats 61-65) and (Surah Al-Kahf, Ayats 51-52). But at every place only that part of the story which was relevant to the context has been cited. Therefore, in order to understand the entire story well, one should read it in all the Surahs along with the relevant E.N's.

(94) This means that he disobeyed the command because he lacked the firmness of purpose and not because of intentional rebellion. He did not say: I don't care for Allah. If it is His command, let it be. I will do whatever I like. Who is Allah to intervene in my private affairs?

On the contrary, he disobeyed because he forgot Allah’s command, and did not show firmness of purpose and determination against the temptations presented by Satan. This is shown by his subsequent repentance.

وَ اِ ذ ۡ قُ ۡ نَا لِلۡمَلٰٓئِکَۃِ ا ۡ سۡجُدُ ۡ ا لِاٰدَمَ فَسَجَدُ ۡ ٓ ا اِلَّاۤ اِبۡلِیۡسَ ؕ اَبٰی ۱۱۶

(20-116) Recall when We said to the angels: "Prostrate yourselves before Adam"; all prostrated themselves save Iblis. He refused.

فَقُلۡنَا یٰۤاٰدَمُ اِنَّ ہٰذَا عَدُوٌّ لَّکَ وَ لِزَوۡجِکَ فَلَا یُخۡرِجَنَّکُمَا مِنَ الۡجَنَّۃِ فَتَشۡقٰی ﴿۱۱۷﴾

(20-117) Then We said: "Adam! (95) He is an enemy to you and to your wife. (96) So let him not drive both of you out of Paradise (97) and plunge you into affliction,

(95) Here the command, which was given to Prophet Adam, has not been mentioned, which was: You must not eat the fruit of this tree. This has been mentioned at other places but has been omitted here because the emphasis here is on this weakness of man that he is easily seduced by Satan in spite of the forewarnings and admonitions to this effect.

(96) Both knew that Satan was their enemy, for Adam himself had witnessed the demonstration of his enmity, when he had refused to bow down before him and declared in plain words: I am better than him. You created me of fire and him of clay. (Surah Al-Araf, Ayat 12); (Surah Sad, Ayat 76), see also (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayat 33). Should I bow before the one whom You created out of clay. And then added: Just consider was he worthy of this that You have exalted him over me. (Surah Al-Isra, Ayats 61-62). Then Satan did not rest content with this bragging of superiority but evinced his jealousy by giving an open challenge that he would prove it by seducing Adam. (Surah Al_Araf, Ayats 16, 17); (Surah Al-Hijr, Ayats 36-42); (Surah Al-Isra, Ayats 62-66); (Surah Sad, Ayats 82-83).

(97) This was to forewarn both of them of the consequences of disobedience of the command.

اِنَّ لَکَ اَلَّا تَجُوۡعَ فِیۡہَا وَ لَا تَعۡرٰی ﴿۱۱۸﴾

(20-118) (for in Paradise) neither are you hungry nor naked,

وَ اَنَّکَ لَا تَظۡمَؤُا فِیۡہَا وَ لَا تَضۡحٰی ﴿۱۱۹﴾

(20-119) nor face thirst or scorching heat." (98)

(98) This is the explanation of the distress which they had to undergo immediately after their expulsion from the Garden. Here instead of mentioning the high and perfect blessings of the Garden, only four basic necessities of life have been stated, namely, food, drink, dress, and shelter, as if to say: In the Garden you are being supplied with all these necessities without any labor from you. But if you succumb to the temptations and seduction of Satan, you will be totally deprived not only of these facilities but also of the higher blessings of the Garden. In that case, you will have to work so hard for these necessities that very little energy and time and leisure will be left with you to strive for higher aims of life.

فَوَسۡوَسَ اِلَيۡهِ الشَّيۡطٰنُ قَالَ يٰۤاٰدَمُ هَلۡ اَدُلُّكَ عَلٰى شَجَرَةِ الۡخُلۡدِ وَ مُلۡكٍ لَّا يَبۡلٰى ﴿۱۲۰﴾

(20-120) But Satan seduced him, (99) saying: "Adam! Shall I direct you to a tree of eternal life and an abiding kingdom?" (100)

(99) According to this verse, it was Adam whom Satan primarily wanted to seduce and not Eve. Though according to (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 20), he tempted both of them and both were seduced, but Satan's efforts were mainly directed to Adam. On the contrary, according to the Bible, the serpent first tempted the woman to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree and then she seduced her husband. (Genesis, 3).

(100) According to this verse, Satan tempted Adam to eat the fruit of the tree so that he might get eternal life and everlasting kingdom, and according to (Surah Al-Aaraf, Ayat 20), he put an additional temptation in their way, saying that they would become angels and immortal.

فَاَكَلَا مِنۡهَا فَبَدَتۡ لَهُمَا سَوۡاٰتُهُمَا وَ طَفِقَا يَخۡصِفٰنِ عَلَيۡهِمَا مِنۡ وَّرَقِ الۡجَنَّةِ وَ عَصٰۤى اٰدَمُ رَبَّهٗ فَغَوٰى ﴿۱۲۱﴾

(20-121) Then the two of them ate the fruit of that tree and their shameful parts became revealed to each other, and they began to cover themselves with the leaves from the

Garden. [101] Thus Adam disobeyed his Lord and strayed into error. [102]

(101) No sooner did they disobey the command, they were deprived of all the facilities, but naturally the immediate effect of this as felt by them was that they were stripped of their garments. Then gradually, as they felt thirsty, hungry etc. they realized that they had been deprived of all the facilities that they enjoyed in the Garden.

(102) It is worth while to understand the nature of human weakness which helped Satan to seduce Adam and Eve. They succumbed to seduction because Satan tempted them in the garb of a true friend and well-wisher even though they knew well that he was their enemy. For, Adam had a direct knowledge of the envy and enmity of Satan, who had challenged to seduce and ruin him in his very presence. Allah had also warned them to guard against the envy of and the temptations by Satan and had informed them of the consequences of disobedience. Above all, Adam and Eve still believed in Allah and never thought of intentional disobedience. But in spite of this, when Satan tempted them in the garb of a friend, they disobeyed their Lord: they forgot the command for the time being for lack of fineness of purpose. And since then this human weakness has persisted in their descendants during all ages.

ثُمَّ اجۡتَبٰهُ رَبُّهٗ فَتَابَ عَلَيۡهِ وَهَدٰى ١٢٢

(20-122) Thereafter his Lord exalted him, [103] accepted his repentance, and bestowed guidance upon him,

(103) “His Lord chose him” because he did not disobey Him intentionally and did not persist in sin arrogantly. As soon as he realized his error, he felt ashamed of it and asked Allah’s pardon: O our Lord, we have wronged ourselves gravely. If You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we shall be totally ruined. (Surah Al-Araf, Ayat 23). In contrast to Adam and Eve, Satan was cursed because he not only disobeyed his Lord but also persisted in his sin, and boldly challenged Him that it was He Who was

responsible for his disobedience, for He had preferred Adam whom He had created of clay over him whom He had made of fire.

قَالَ اهۡبِطَا مِنۡهَا جَمِيۡعًا ۚ بَعۡضُكُمۡ لِبَعۡضٍ عَدُوٌّ ۚ فَاِمَّا يَاۡتِيَنَّكُمۡ مِّنِّىۡ هُدًى ۙ فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَاىَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشۡقٰى ۝١٢٣

(20-123) and said: [104] "Get down, both of you, (that is, man and Satan), and be out of it; each of you shall be an enemy to the other. Henceforth if there comes to you a guidance from Me, then whosoever follows My guidance shall neither go astray nor suffer misery.

(104) That is, Allah not only pardoned him but also gave him guidance and taught him the way to follow it.

وَمَنۡ اَعۡرَضَ عَنۡ ذِكۡرِىۡ فَاِنَّ لَهٗ مَعِيۡشَةً ضَنۡكًا وَّنَحۡشُرُهٗ يَوۡمَ الۡقِيٰمَةِ اَعۡمٰى ۝١٢٤

(20-124) But whosoever turns away from this Admonition from Me shall have a straitened life; [105] We shall raise him blind on the Day of Resurrection," [106]

(105) "A life of hardship" does not mean a life of poverty. It means that such a one shall be deprived of the peace of mind, even though he may be a millionaire or the ruler of a vast empire. For, the one who will turn away from the admonition will win all the worldly successes by unlawful means and, therefore, will always be suffering from pangs of a guilty conscience and deprived of the peace of mind and real happiness.

(106) Here the story of Prophet Adam (peace be upon him) ends. In the light of this part of the story which has been related here and at other places in the Quran, I have come to the conclusion (and correct knowledge is with Allah alone) that the vicegerency of the earth was the same as was initially bestowed on Adam in the Garden, which might have been created in the heavens or on this earth. Anyhow the vicegerent of Allah was supplied gratis with all the necessities of life and the angels were placed under his command for service. This was to enable him to discharge the high and noble obligations of vicegerency, without

any worry about the procurement of the necessities of life. But in order to make him permanent in this office, it was necessary to put him to a test so that all his capabilities, excellences and weaknesses might be known. Accordingly, he had to take his test in which some of his weaknesses came to the surface. He was prone to be seduced by greed and temptation. He did not remain firm in obedience. He was capable of forgetfulness. That is why he was given the vicegerency as a trial on the earth for a fixed term up to the Day of Judgment. During this period of trial, he had himself to make arrangements for the necessities of life though he was allowed to exploit all the resources of the earth and to rule over other creatures. The trial is this: does he or does he not obey his Lord in spite of having the power to obey or not to obey. And if he forgets or is seduced by greed, does he or does he not repent through warning and admonition, when he realizes his error. At the same time, his Lord has warned him that a full and perfect record of all his deeds and misdeeds is being kept, and that he shall be judged on the Day of Reckoning in accordance with it. Those who will come out successful will be given permanent vicegerency and that eternal life and everlasting kingdom by which Satan seduced him. The righteous servants will become the heirs to the Garden, if they had obeyed their Lord or repented after forgetfulness. It should also be noted well that life in the Garden will not merely be to eat, drink and be merry, but there will be such higher things to achieve as no human being can conceive in this world. That is why only those blessings of the Garden have been mentioned in the Quran which can be comprehended by human beings in this world.

It will be worthwhile to make a comparative study of the account of Adam and Eve as given in the Quran with that given in the Bible. According to Genesis:

And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree, the tree of life and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And the Lord God

commanded the man, saying: Of every tree of the garden thou mayst freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed. (2:725). Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die. For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. She took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard Thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And He said, who told thee that thou west naked? Hast thou eaten, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gayest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the woman said, the serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every blast of the field. Upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life. And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed. It shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception, in sorrow thou shall bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which 1 commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life. In the

sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them. And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. (3 :1-23).

It is obvious that the Bible has not done justice to Adam and Eve, nay, even to God Himself. On the other hand, the account given in the Quran is itself a clear proof that the stories given in it have not been copied from the Bible; for the Quran not only corroborates those parts of the Bible which have remained un-tampered but also corrects its wrong statements.

قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِيْٓ اَعْمٰى وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيْرًا ﴿١٢٥﴾

(20-125) where-upon he will say: "Lord! Why have You raised me blind when I had sight in the world?"

قَالَ كَذٰلِكَ اَتَتْكَ اٰيٰتُنَا فَنَسِيْتَهَا ۚ وَكَذٰلِكَ الْيَوْمَ تُنْسٰى ﴿١٢٦﴾

(20-126) He will say: "Even so it is. Our Signs came to you and you ignored them. So shall you be ignored this Day." (107)

(107) The Quran has described the different conditions and experiences through which the criminals will pass from the Day of Resurrection to the time of their entry into Hell: You were neglectful of this, now We have removed the curtain from before you and your sight has become very sharp. (Surah Qaaf, Ayat 22). He is only deferring them to the Day when all eyes shall stare with consternation. They will be running in terror with heads uplifted and eyes fixed upwards and hearts void. (Surah Ibrahim, Ayats 42-43). We have fastened the augury of every man to his own neck and on the Day of Resurrection We will bring forth a writing which he will find like an open book. (It will be said to him:) Here is your record: read it. Today you can yourself reckon your account. (Surah Al-Isra, Ayats 13-14). In the light of the above and this (Verse 126), it

appears that in the Hereafter, the criminals shall be enabled to see the horrible sights and to realize the consequences of their evil deeds, but in other respects they will be like the blind man who cannot see his way and is deprived of even a staff to feel his way, nor is there anyone to guide him. So he stumbles and is knocked about and does not know where to go and how to satisfy his needs. This very state has been expressed thus: You forgot Our Revelations when they came to you, so you are being forgotten today, as if, you were blind and had no one to look after you.

وَ كَذٰلِكَ نَجۡزِیۡ مَنۡ اَسۡرَفَ وَ لَمۡ یُؤۡمِنۡۢ بِاٰیٰتِ رَبِّہٖ ؕ وَ لَعَذَابُ الۡاٰخِرَۃِ اَشَدُّ وَ اَبۡقٰی ﴿۱۲۷﴾

(20-127) Thus do We requite him who transgresses and does not believe in the signs of your Lord [108] (during the life of the world); and surely the punishment of the Hereafter is even more terrible and more enduring.

(108) This refers to the wretched life which will be the lot of those who turn away from the admonition in this worldly life.

اَفَلَمۡ یَہۡدِ لَہُمۡ کَمۡ اَہۡلَکۡنَا قَبۡلَہُمۡ مِّنَ الۡقُرُوۡنِ یَمۡشُوۡنَ فِیۡ مَسٰکِنِہِمۡ ؕ اِنَّ فِیۡ ذٰلِکَ لَاٰیٰتٍ لِّاُولِی النُّہٰی ﴿۱۲۸﴾

(20-128) Did they [109] not find any guidance in the fact that We destroyed many nations in whose ruined dwelling-places they now walk about? Surely there are many Signs in them for people endowed with wisdom. [110]

(109) “For them”: means people of Makkah.

(110) That is, in this lesson of history and in the observation of the archaeological remains and in this experience of mankind.

وَ لَوۡ لَا کَلِمَۃٌ سَبَقَتۡ مِنۡ رَّبِّکَ لَکَانَ لِزَامًا وَّ اَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّی ﴿۱۲۹﴾

(20-129) Were it not for a word already gone from your Lord, the decree (of their destruction) would have come to pass.

فَاصْبِرْ عَلٰى مَا يَقُوْلُوْنَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوْعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ غُرُوْبِهَا وَمِنْ اٰنَآئِ الَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَاَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضٰى ﴿١٣٠﴾

(20-130) So bear patiently with what they say. Glorify your Lord, praising Him before sunrise and before sunset, and in the watches of the night, (111) and glorify Him and at the ends of the day that you may attain to happiness. (112)

(111) This is to comfort and console the Prophet (peace be upon him), as if to say: Allah does not intend to destroy them yet, for He has appointed for them a term of respite, so you should endure with patience whatever they do against you and hear their harsh talk and go on performing the obligations of your mission. For this purpose you should offer Salat in accordance with the prescribed times because it will create in you necessary forbearance and fortitude.

"Glorify Him" means: Offer your prescribed Prayers, as is clear from Ayat 132.

Incidentally in this Verse (130) the times of Salat have been prescribed: (1) Fajr Prayer before sunrise. (2) Asr Prayer before sunset. (3) Isha and Tahajjud Prayers during the hours of night. Morning and Afternoon (Dhuhr) and Evening (Maghrib) Prayers at the extremes of the day. See also (E.Ns. 91 to 97 of Surah Al-Isra).

(112) The original Arabic Text admits of two meanings.

(1) Rest content with your present condition in which you have to hear many unpleasant things for the sake of your mission, and submit to this decree that they are not being punished for the time being, for they will continue to persecute you and at the same time lead prosperous lives.

(2) Go on performing your mission, for as a result of this, you will be fully satisfied.

This second meaning is supported by (a) (Surah AL-Isra, Ayat 79): That time is not far when your Lord may exalt you to a laudable position, which follows the commandment about Salat, (b) (Surah Ad-Duha, Ayats 4-5): Surely the later period of life will be better for you than the former, and in the near future your Lord will give you so much that you will be fully satisfied.

وَ لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيۡنَيۡكَ اِلٰى مَا مَتَّعۡنَا بِهٖۤ اَزۡوَاجًا مِّنۡهُمۡ زَهۡرَةَ الۡحَيٰوةِ الدُّنۡيَا ۙ لِنَفۡتِنَهُمۡ فِيۡهِ ؕ وَ رِزۡقُ رَبِّكَ خَيۡرٌ وَّ اَبۡقٰى ﴿۱۳۱﴾

(20-131) Do not turn your eyes covetously towards the embellishments of worldly life that We have bestowed upon various kinds of people to test them. But the clean provision bestowed upon you (113) by your Lord is better and more enduring.

(113) It means: It does not behoove you and your companions to be envious of the riches of the wicked people who are amassing wealth by unlawful means. The best thing for you is the lawful provision which you earn by your hard labor, even though this may be meager in quantity. That is better for the pious and righteous and is of everlasting virtue.

وَ اۡمُرۡ اَهۡلَكَ بِالصَّلٰوةِ وَ اصۡطَبِرۡ عَلَيۡهَا ؕ لَا نَسۡـَٔـلُكَ رِزۡقًا ؕ نَحۡنُ نَرۡزُقُكَ ؕ وَ الۡعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقۡوٰى ﴿۱۳۲﴾

(20-132) Enjoin Prayer on your household, (114) and do keep observing it. We do not ask you for any worldly provision; rather, it is We Who provide you, and ultimately the pious will end up the best.(115)

(114) That is, also teach your children that lawful provision is much better than the unlawful riches of the wicked people. For this purpose, enjoin them to say their prescribed Prayers, for this will change their attitude, their standard of values, and make them contented with pure provisions and virtuous life in preference to the life of sin and luxury.

(115) It implies this: We do not ask you to offer your Prayers for any benefit of Our own. We ask you to do that for your own good, because this will create piety in you which will bring about true success for you in this world and in the Hereafter.

وَ قَالُوۡا لَوۡ لَا یَاۡتِیۡنَا بِاٰیَۃٍ مِّنۡ رَّبِّہٖ ؕ اَوَ لَمۡ تَاۡتِہِمۡ بَیِّنَۃُ مَا فِی الصُّحُفِ الۡاُوۡلٰی ﴿۱۳۳﴾

(20-133) They ask: "Why does he not bring us a (miraculous) sign from his Lord?" Has there not come to them a Book containing the teachings of the previous scriptures? (116)

(116) This means that the Quran itself is a great miracle, for though it is being presented by an unlettered person from among them, it contains the essence of the teachings and guidance of all tire previous divine Books. Not only that, it makes those teachings and guidance so plain and clear that even a simple man of the desert can benefit from them.

وَ لَوۡ اَنَّاۤ اَہۡلَکۡنٰہُمۡ بِعَذَابٍ مِّنۡ قَبۡلِہٖ لَقَالُوۡا رَبَّنَا لَوۡ لَاۤ اَرۡسَلۡتَ اِلَیۡنَا رَسُوۡلًا فَنَتَّبِعَ اٰیٰتِکَ مِنۡ قَبۡلِ اَنۡ نَّذِلَّ وَ نَخۡزٰی ﴿۱۳۴﴾

(20-134) Had We destroyed them through some calamity before his coming, they would have said: "Our Lord! Why did You not send any Messenger to us that we might have followed Your signs before being humbled and disgraced?"

قُلۡ کُلٌّ مُّتَرَبِّصٌ فَتَرَبَّصُوۡا ۚ فَسَتَعۡلَمُوۡنَ مَنۡ اَصۡحٰبُ الصِّرَاطِ السَّوِیِّ وَ مَنِ اہۡتَدٰی ﴿۱۳۵﴾٪

(20-135) Tell them, (O Muhammad): "Everyone is waiting for his end. (117) Wait, then, and you will soon know who are the people of the Right Way, and are rightly-guided."

(117) That is, ever since the message of Islam is being presented in your city (Makkah), it is not only every person of this city who is waiting for its ultimate result but also every one outside it, who has heard of it.